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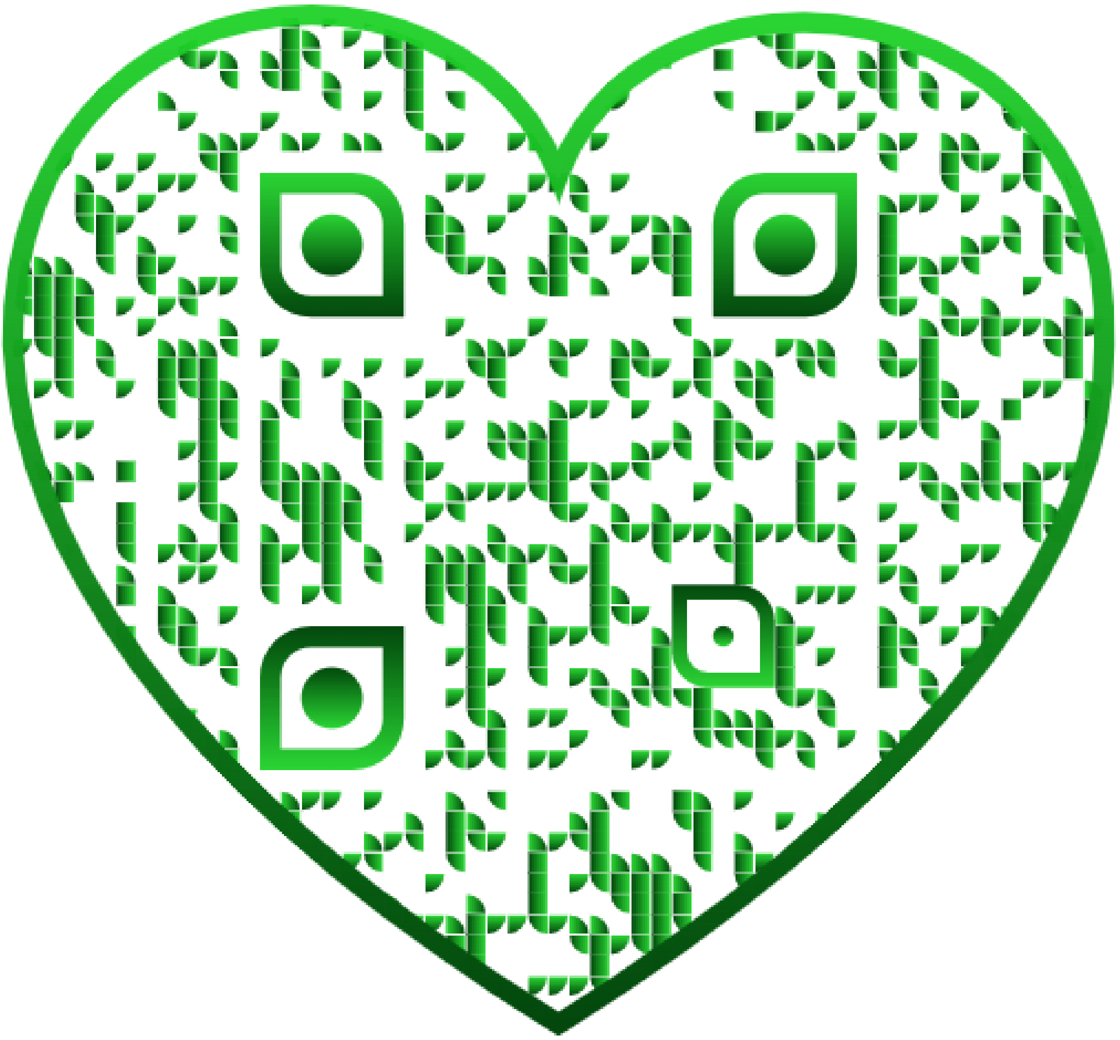
THE TRIUMPHANT RETURN OF

AC/DC

"THIS ONE'S FOR MAL, HE'S STILL PART OF THIS!"

FUTURE

ISSUE 282



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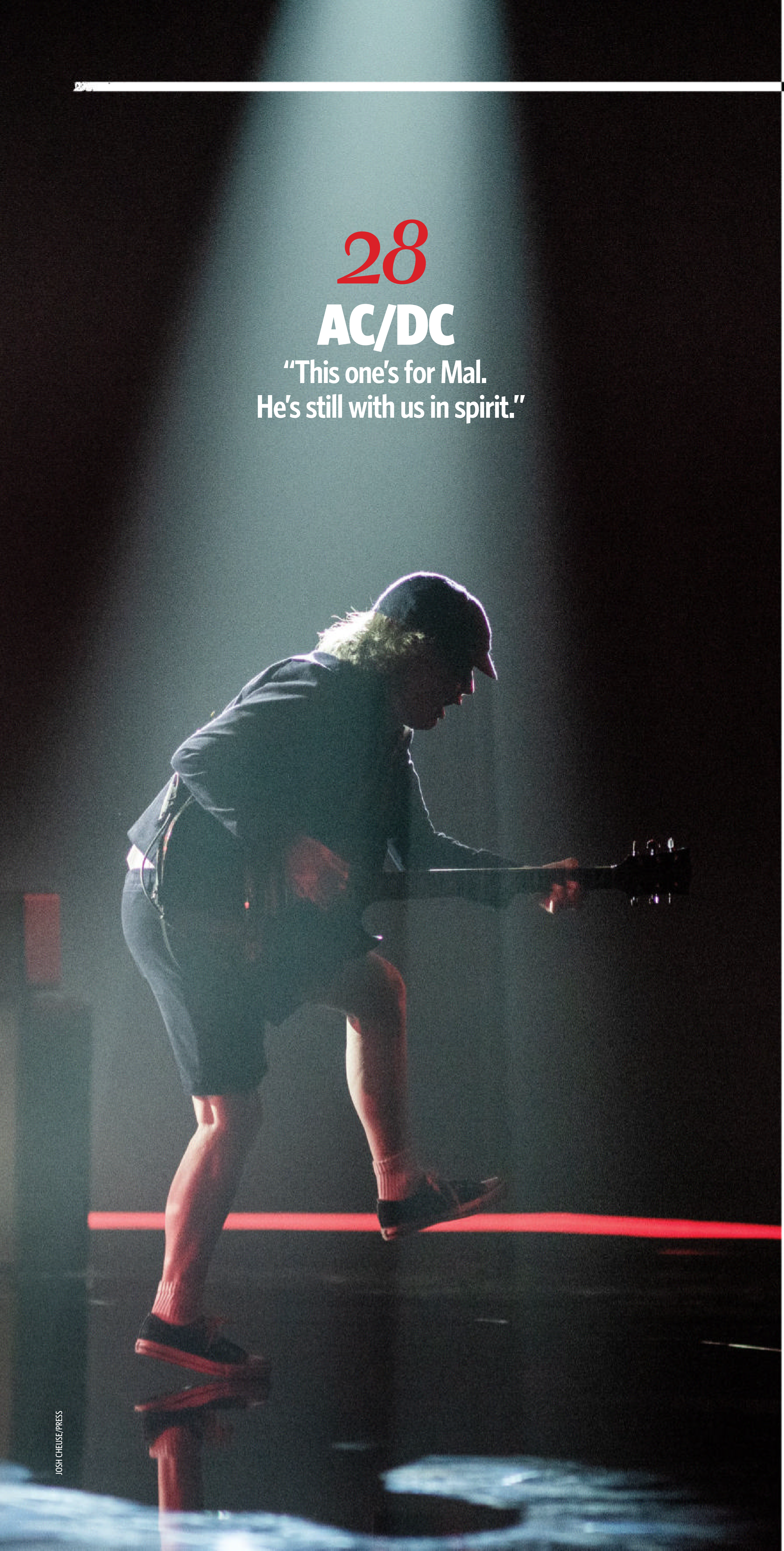

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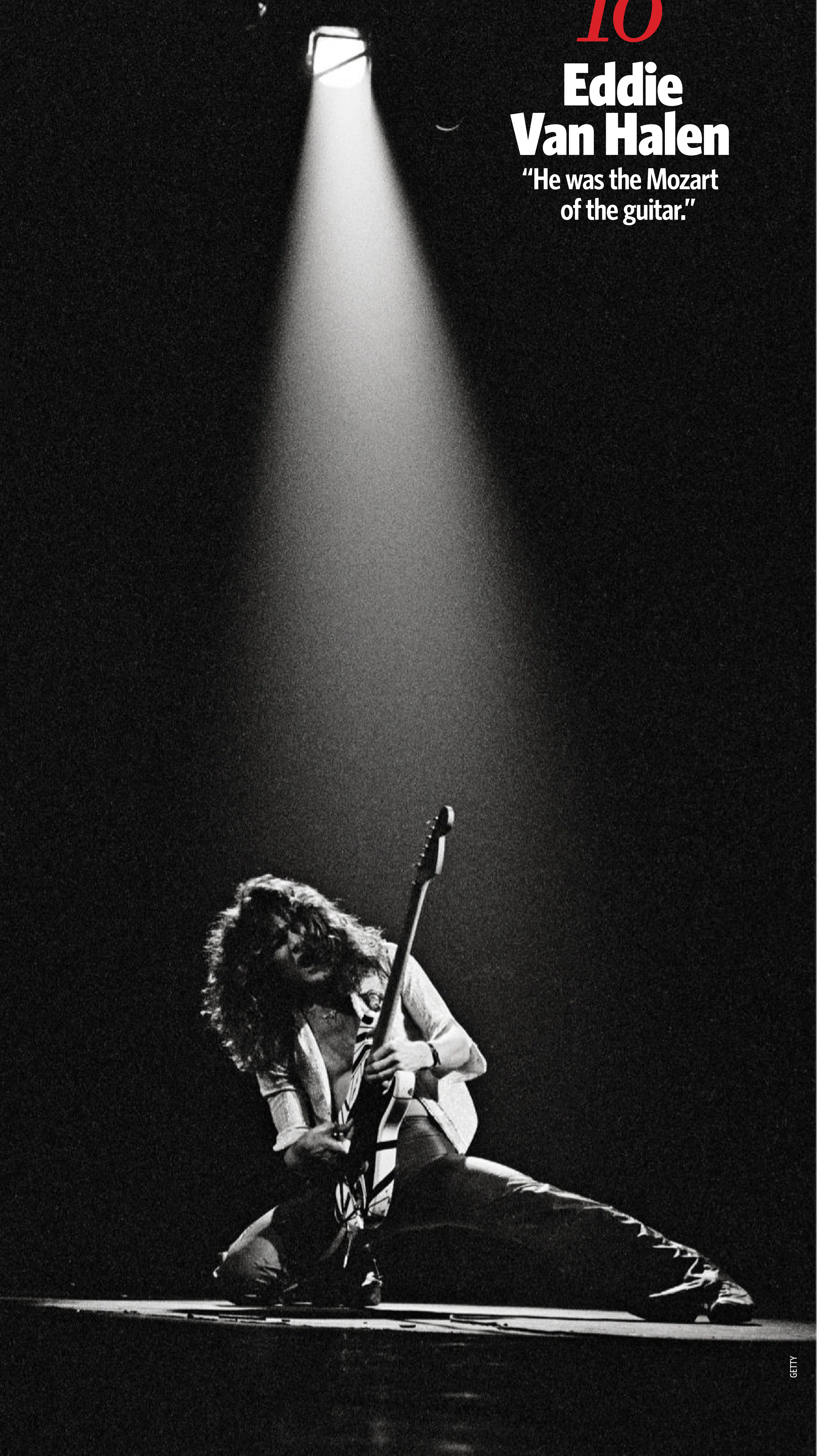

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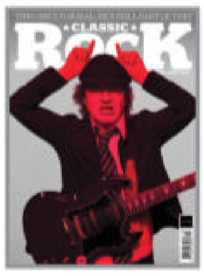
Sometimes things catch you a little off guard. And one such instance happened this month. It was a random Tuesday evening a couple of weeks ago when, just before 9pm, I received a text from a friend stating simply: 'EVH dead'. Although I knew that Eddie Van Halen had been suffering again with the cancer that finally claimed him, I didn't see this one coming. It's going to take a long time to process that he is no longer here in the world with us. What we do have, however, is the music he left behind; his songwriting and his incredible guitar pyrotechnics. He was the last great guitar hero that truly changed guitar playing and rock music forever. We pay tribute from page 10.

On a much brighter note, we do still have things to celebrate this month. Primary among them is the return of AC/DC and their new album, with Brian Johnson back at the mic. Just as things should be. We sat down with Brian and Angus to discuss their return, how Malcolm influenced the new record, AXL/DC and so much more unmissable stuff (p28).

Talking of unmissable, there's one sure-fire way of making sure you never miss another jam-packed issue of *Classic Rock*, and that's by becoming a subscriber (you'll save money too!). Now's the perfect time to drop hints to Santa that all you want for Christmas is a *CR* subscription. Turn to page 52 to discover our best deals.

Until next month...

Siân Llewellyn,
Editor



THE COVER
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This month's contributors

HANNAH MAY KILROY
Having started her music journalism career as an intern at *Classic Rock*, Hannah May has since worked for a number of music magazines, and she was previously Deputy Ed at our sister magazine *Prog*. This issue she celebrated her love of southern rock by talking to Black Stone Cherry for us (p38).

TOM MORELLO
The perfect contributor – we gave him a commission, a word count and a deadline, and Tom delivered his copy on time. He wrote about his early years as a teenage metalhead (p46) and accompanied them with personal photos from his new book, *Whatever It Takes*. When not writing for *CR*, Tom spends most of his time playing guitar in bands including Rage Against The Machine and Prophets Of Rage.

STEVEN ROSEN
Steven spent a lot of time with Eddie Van Halen over the years, and he was the man to whom we turned when we learned the devastating news about Eddie's passing. You can read his tribute on p10. Steven has been writing about music for nearly 50 years, has written seven books and has also recently started a YouTube channel – check it out at tiny.cc/srosen

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ROSS HALFIN

EDDIE VAN HALEN

January 26, 1955 - October 6, 2020

Classic Rock's Steven Rosen takes a personal look back at the music, life and times of the late, great guitar hero. The irreplaceable man who was "the Mozart of the guitar".

Van Halen: (clockwise from bottom left) Alex Van Halen, Michael Anthony, David Lee Roth and Eddie Van Halen.

Guitar hero: EVH in full flow.

On October 6, the world grew shockingly quieter when guitar revolutionary and visionary Edward Lodewijk Van Halen finally surrendered to a devastating decades-long battle with throat cancer at the far too young age of 65. He was surrounded by his wife Janie, son Wolfgang, brother Alex and ex-wife Valerie Bertinelli upon his passing at St. Johns Hospital in Santa Monica, California.

Over the course of an extraordinary career that spanned 42 years and a dozen albums, the Dutch-born guitarist created an entirely new lexicon for the electric guitar player, a crazy ABC of never-heard-before techniques, tones and harmonic templates. On February 10, 1978, when the first album bearing his name was released, all these elements were unleashed in a pulverising sonic blitz in which he rewrote the language of the guitar. Guitarists around the world realised they'd just heard the death knell for everything they ever knew. From that day forward, guitar playing – and rock'n'roll itself – would never be the same.

'Over the course of an extraordinary career, Edward Van Halen rewrote the language of guitar playing.'

But that seminal day might have never happened, because the boy who would become King Edward and reinvent the guitar for the next generation began his musical upbringing not as a guitar player but as a reluctant classical pianist.

Shortly after his birth on January 26, 1955 in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, the Van Halen family moved 55 miles away to Nijmegen, where Eddie and older brother Alex shared a bedroom in a small house. At the insistence of his mother Eugenia Van Beers, who was an amateur piano player, Eddie was made to endure classical piano training. Alex had already been doing battle with the ivories, and to support the budding musical careers of her two sons Eugenia scraped together a few guilders and bought them a Rippen upright piano.

"She could barely afford it," Alex said, years later. Money was tight, even though Jan Van Halen, the family patriarch, was a first-chair jazz saxophone and clarinet player in the Dutch Air Force, making records and playing at some of the most prestigious halls in Holland. But still, there was little left at the end of the day.

"The earliest memories I have musically is that our father was into music and you couldn't help be touched by it," the elder Van Halen brother told me. "Ed and I watched him practise. We were surrounded by music by our mother. She played piano but didn't play well and was very interested in music and always told us to go out and practise. I was never into playing piano, but I'll never forget that my mom would always say: 'Some day you'll thank us for this.'"

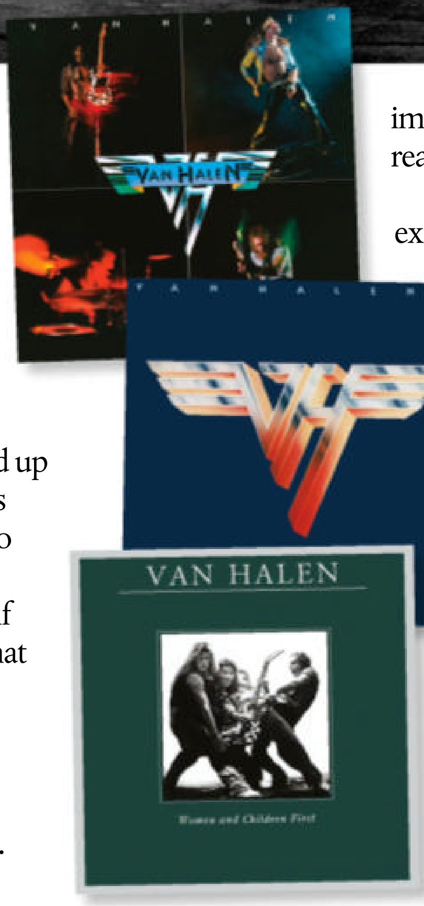
Prophetic words indeed.

Eugenia, sensing that life was going nowhere in Nijmegen, declared the family was moving to America. She had a sister living in California, and in 1962 the Van Halens locked the doors and embarked on a seven-day voyage to the US aboard a Dutch cruise ship. Although Van Halen Sr had only $25 in his pocket, there was never a question about bringing the family's most prized possession. "We took the piano," Alex said. "We were broke, and the last few pennies that we did have we had to pay for the extra cartage on the piano, which was damaged."

Still, it was a good thing they had brought it along. Jan Van Halen was able to underwrite some of the cost of passage by playing on stage with the ship's house band, while Eddie, seated next to the musicians, pounded out chords on the Rippen. "Ed was this little kid whose feet barely touched the ground," Alex recalled.

After landing on American soil, the Van Halens took up life in Pasadena, a quiet suburb about 11 miles north-east of Los Angeles. Eugenia was adamant that her sons kept up with their piano studies. But a sea change was coming, one that

ALAMY



would wash over the brothers like a tidal wave.

Like many other kids their age, the Van Halen boys wanted to rock. Beethoven was replaced by The Beatles, and classical gave way to Cream. They were digging the Dave Clark Five and Jan & Dean. Alex abandoned piano and picked up a Teisco Del Rey guitar his parents bought for him. He took flamenco lessons for a while but, try as he might, six strings proved to be half a dozen too many. "No matter what I tried,"Alex said, "it wasn't happening, man."

In the meantime, Eddie had signed up for a paper round in order to be able to buy a drum kit. While his younger brother was pedalling his bicycle all over the neighborhood flinging papers on to front lawns, Alex was "banging away with the drums".

Eddie would return home from his route, see his brother pounding on the drum kit and just naturally picked up the Teisco Del Rey, plugged it into the Silvertone amp his parents had purchased and begin strumming.

Fate? Destiny? Freaking dumb luck? Did Ed find the guitar, or did the guitar find Ed? Questions impossible to answer. And yet all we really need to know was that it happened.

Alex was there and he witnessed the extraordinary connection his brother had with the guitar from the moment he touched it. Ed cradled the Teisco as if he'd been born with the instrument in his hands. "I could tell by what he was doing and how he was imitating and listening to different people and being able to play the same thing, that this guy knew what the hell he was doing," Alex told me.

We were sitting on the patio outside of Edward's 5150 home studio in the Hollywood Hills, and at this moment in our conversation, Ed walked out of the studio, nodded and sat in a lounge chair apart from us, as if he wanted to be reminded of his story as well.

"He was clean," Alex said, referring to Ed's already semi-developed technique while still a beginner. "He used to play a song called *Foot Patter* [a blues instrumental by sixties surf group The Fireballs]. He learned it from a record and he played it better than the people who were on the record. I could hear it. I mean, there was no doubt in my mind." ▷

MAIN: ROSS HALFIN; INSET: GETTY

THE STARS PAY TRIBUTE

Eddie was a guitar wonder, his playing pure wizardry. To the world of music he was a special gift. To those of us fortunate enough to have met him, a special person. He leaves a big hole in a lot of hearts.
Angus Young, AC/DC

He was the real deal. He pioneered a dazzling technique on guitar with taste and panache that I felt always placed him above his imitators.
Jimmy Page

Frank Zappa said that Eddie reinvented the guitar. I agree. A brilliant guitarist who started a technique of guitar playing which was emulated by a whole generation of guitarists, he was one of the nicest musicians I ever met. Very shy and not at all conceited about his ability as a guitar player.
Ritchie Blackmore

The Great American Guitar Player. I was hoping he might be President one day.
Pete Townshend

You were the BEST of our generation. I am so sorry you have gone. My highest respect for your incredible guitar playing, sound, melodies, your sense of rhythm, your amazing entertaining abilities and everything else. You were a complete, fantastic, all-round amazing guitarist.
Michael Schenker

The music will live forever. I'll sing it as long as I live.
Sammy Hagar

Crushed. So fucking crushed. RIP Eddie Van Halen. You changed our world. You were the Mozart of rock guitar. Travel safe, rock star.
Nikki Sixx, Mötley Crüe

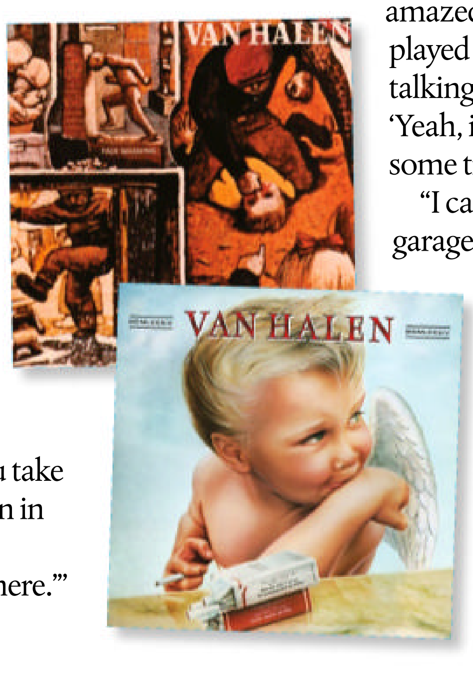
Dave Lee Roth and Eddie backstage at Lewisham Odeon, London in May 1978.

There would never be a doubt in anybody's mind ever again. The brothers played together in a series of bands – Genesis, Bauld, Mammoth – where Edward not only played guitar but also handled lead vocals as well. But Ed pulling double duty wasn't working.

"Ed was good, but it was our feeling that he should concentrate on playing guitar," Alex said. "To be a good singer you have to concentrate on being a singer, and it did not come very naturally to Ed. And Ed was definitely not a showman. Ed and I have gotten into fist fights for me telling him: 'You know, move, do something!' Because if you look at our early days, I'll tell ya, Ed did not move one bit."

Enter David Lee Roth, livewire singer in a rival Pasadena band called Red Ball Jet and, more importantly, a dude who owned a PA system. The Van Halens were forever shelling out ten dollars every time they borrowed Roth's rig, so they figured they'd just get him in the band and end up with not only a singer but a PA as well.

"I said: 'Dave, let's get together and make some music,'" Alex recalled. "He came in and I was completely and thoroughly appalled. I was so disappointed. Ed left the room, and I'm sitting there holding the bag. I'm the one who has to tell Roth: 'Forget it, pal, this ain't no good.' Well, I figured I'd give him another shot. I said: 'Why don't you take these songs, listen to them, and then in a week after you've worked on 'em, come back, and we'll take it from there.'"



Eventually Dave was given another shot and made the cut. At that moment, the band name was changed to Van Halen, at Roth's urging, and original bassist Mark Stone was let go and replaced by Michael Anthony about a year after the singer joined. Anthony, bass player and singer with a rival Pasadena band called Snake, recalled the night his group opened for the Van Halen brothers.

"The 'brown sound' is basically a tone, a feeling that I'm always working at."

EVH on his elusive, inimitable tone

"We opened up for 'em at Pasadena High School and I got to talking with 'em," Anthony said. "I was watching 'em on the side of the stage and I'm thinking: 'Yeah, these guys are great.' I was always amazed that Edward back in that time played and sounded like that. I was talking with Edward and I was saying: 'Yeah, it might be kind of cool to jam some time.'

"I came down and it was a little garage they were rehearsing in, and Roth never even showed up. It was just Edward and Alex, and we played all night. We had a few beers and kept playing and Ed asked me: 'Hey, would you like to join the band?'"

And so the stage for Van Halen's imminent world domination was set.

The newly minted quartet began slogging it out at the local clubs, auditioning multiple times at every dive bar and club in the area before finally landing a gig. It was at one of those early shows at the Starwood club in Hollywood when Kiss's Gene Simmons first bore witness to EVH's magical guitar prowess.

"I saw them that night and was left incredulous," he tells *Classic Rock*. "I stood at the front of the stage and couldn't believe my eyes and ears. This was one man making all of these sounds with his bare hands? Everybody in the band was singing and playing live, and Eddie was a complete guitar symphony in his own right. In those early days Ed would sometimes stand with his back to the audiences because he didn't want to give his tricks away. But even if you saw how he played those licks, how could you possibly emulate them?"

Short answer: you couldn't. While desperately trying to run down a booking, Eddie began tinkering with his guitars; 'full-blown six-string surgery' might be a more accurate description. He had an innate sense for it. He was a wood whisperer, a whammy bard. He breathed sawdust, while solder coursed through his veins… Having played a Gibson Les Paul Standard, Ibanez Destroyer and a Fender Strat during the band's early days, Eddie had grown increasingly disenchanted with what he was hearing, and what he was hearing was a sound no one had ever heard before. Nobody, that is, except him.

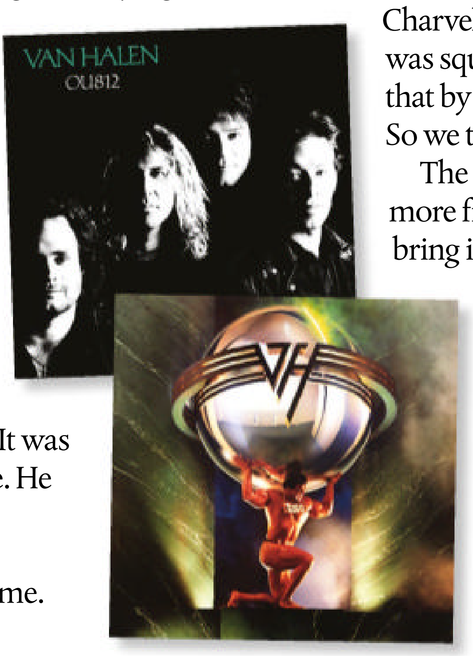
I asked him: "If your guitar sound was a colour, what colour would it be?" The question now sounds like some hippie-dippy horseshit but it elicited the following response and provided a bright shining light on what he was hearing in his head.

GETTY

Van Halen, the second act: EVH with Sammy Hagar.

"Brown. The 'brown sound' is basically a tone, a feeling that I'm always working at," Edward told me. "Everything is involved in that and I've been working with it since I've been playing. It comes from the person."

The latter is a fact with which Steve Vai agrees. "I was in my studio, I was using my guitar, my rig, my pedals, my amps," Vai told *Rolling Stone* shortly after Eddie's death. "And Edward came in. We were just hanging out and talking, and he says to me: 'Let me show you this one thing I was working on.' And he takes my guitar and he starts playing, and I realised instantly that it was Edward Van Halen. It didn't sound anything like me. It had that 'brown sound'. It was everything we love about Ed's tone. He was playing *my* exact gear, and it sounded like him."



Brown, the color of wood. Sublime. Edward's tone came from a very organic place, that rare and holy space where the head translated to perfection what the heart wanted to hear. This was where the giants found inspiration. The masters, immortals such as Hendrix, Steinbeck, DaVinci, Einstein. This was the high country, the realm of genius. This was where Edward lived.

He started butchering, bastardising and building his own guitars. Bolting necks to bodies, inserting various pickups and whammy bars, rewiring and rethinking the way guitars had been built up to that point, Eddie was unknowingly creating what would become the custom guitar market.

Edward needed help in his relentless quest, and through word of mouth stumbled upon Wayne Charvel. He had a shop in Azusa, California called Charvel's Guitar Repair, where he built bodies and eventually entire guitars.

"He just walked in the store one day, and I had heard about him from some of the other kids," Charvel told me. "He had a pickup that was squealing on him. I told him to cure that by dipping or soaking it in hot wax. So we tried it and he liked it."

The visits to the repair shop became more frequent. Eddie would sometimes bring in his most recent creation, sit on the floor with legs crossed, and play. "I knew he was real good," Charvel said. "He was real different than anybody, and everybody was raving about him."

On one occasion, Eddie brought in a brand new, natural-colored Ibanez Destroyer, a Gibson Explorer copy, that he wanted Charvel to paint black. Charvel was backed up and said he would paint it but there was no way he could get to it in less than three months. The young inventor could hardly wait three minutes, much less three months and took the instrument with him.

"He came back with the guitar and he had drilled holes all the way through it," Charvel remembered. "He drilled holes all the way down, like a shark or something [the Ibanez would come to be nicknamed The Shark]. I couldn't believe he did that to that brand-new guitar! He was always taking screwdrivers and really gouging out stuff ▷

MAIN: GETTY; INSET: ROSS HALFIN

That first Van Halen album blew open everyone's minds to the potential of electric guitar.
Kirk Hammett, Metallica

Just when I thought 2020 couldn't get any worse, I hear Eddie Van Halen has passed. So shocking. One of the nicest, down-to-earth men I have ever met and toured with.
Geezer Butler, Black Sabbath

Once in a while someone comes along and changes the musical universe. EVH was one of those few. I wish you'd had more time, who knows what would have come next.
Bryan Adams

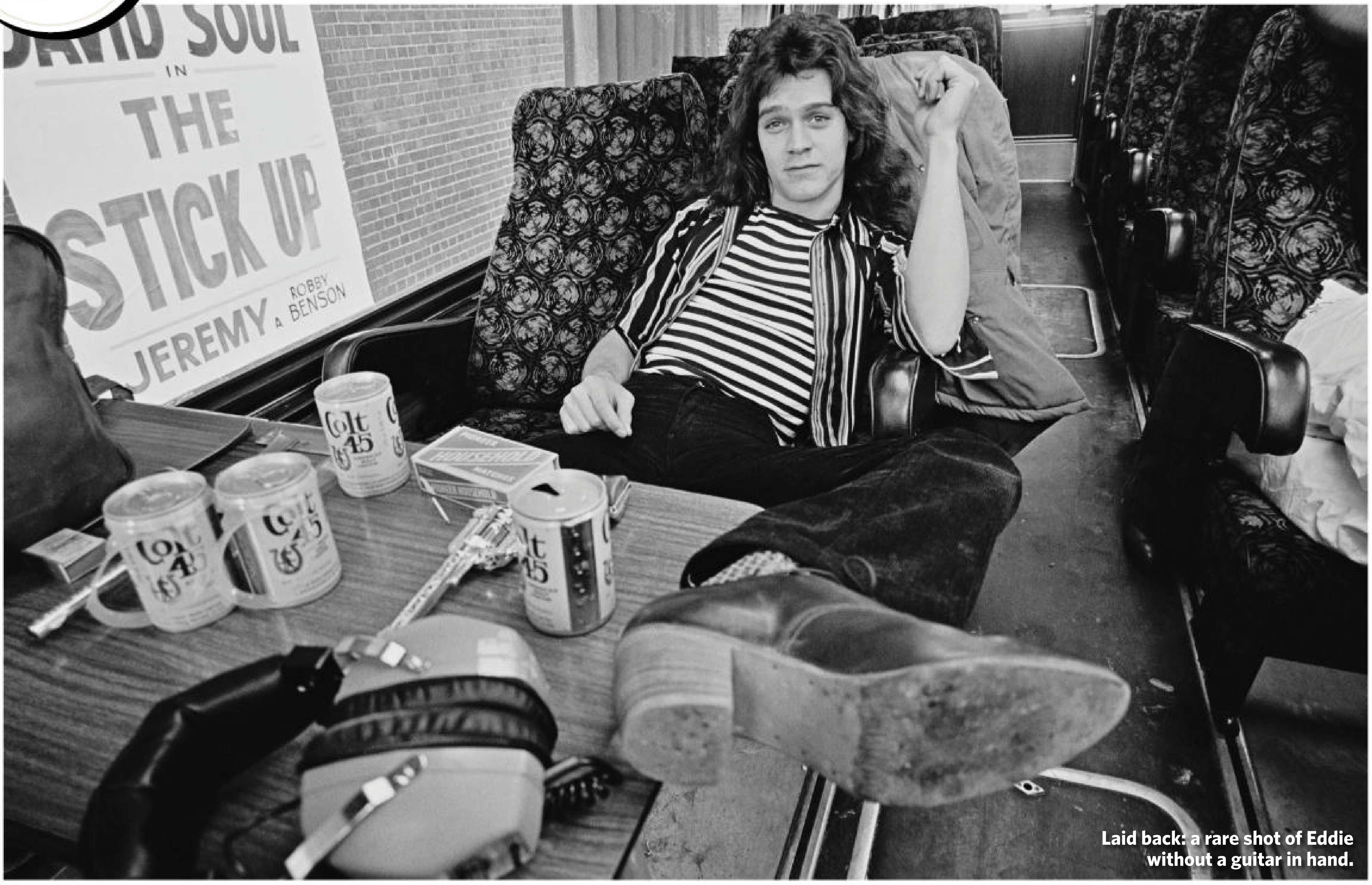
I'm just devastated to hear the news of the passing of my dear friend Eddie Van Halen. He fought a long and hard battle with his cancer right to the very end. Eddie was one of a very special kind of person, a really great friend.
Tony Iommi, Black Sabbath

This wonderful man was way too young to be taken. What a talent - what a legacy. Probably the most original and dazzling rock guitarist in history.
Brian May, Queen

I am so extremely sad about losing my friend and great inspiration. He was the greatest guitar player ever, and at the same time so kind and compassionate. He supported me and my family in every way possible.
Jason Becker

Words cannot describe how monumental the loss of Edward Van Halen is to the music community. He inspired generations of guitar players of all genres. His playing was unrivalled in its ingenuity and its ferocity. Rest In Peace to the greatest rock guitarist of all time.
Joe Bonamassa

Completely altered the direction of the Complete Culture of the Guitar As We Know It. A True Hero
Vernon Reid, Living Colour



Laid back: a rare shot of Eddie without a guitar in hand.

and dropping pickups in, but that was good because that's the way to experiment. How are you going to find out what works?"

Maintaining that head-space, Eddie continued on his quest for the ultimate brown sound, which eventually gave birth to the Frankenstrat, the white guitar pictured on the cover of Van Halen's debut lbum.

When *Van Halen* was released in February of 1978, it was a shot in the arm for hard rock, musically, sonically and from a songwriting perspective. For the previous generation of guitar players, still entranced by Eric Clapton, Jimi Hendrix and Jimmy Page, it was a revelation. Eddie Van Halen's playing and technique was light years away from the traditional blues-rock format musicians had followed for a decade, and a quantum leap towards something more futuristic.

In one of his first interviews from 1978, conducted right after the release of the first album, Edward talked to me about his genre-changing instrument.

"It looks like a Strat, but there's a place called Charvel Guitars and they custom make 'em," he said. "It was like a junk neck and a hacked-up body that was just laying around, and I wanted to experiment building my own guitar so I could get the sound I wanted. See, I always wanted a Strat for the vibrato bar, because I love that effect. So I just bought it from them for fifty dollars and the neck for ninety dollars and slapped it together. Put an old humbucking pickup in it and one volume knob, and painted it up the way I wanted it to look, and it screams."

It was a scream heard around the world. That electric bellow would reverberate for decades to come, and still resonates in the ears of modern guitar players today. Any guitar you now see with just one humbucking pickup and one tone control can be traced back to EVH.

And how do you even begin to acknowledge the massive impact of Ed's right-hand tapping technique, so famously illustrated on *Eruption*? Had he never done anything else but record that one track, his legacy would have been chiselled forever in stone.

"I really don't know how to explain that, man," the hammer-on wizard told me in '78. The *Van Halen* album had just come out when I sat down with Ed, and this might have been the first time anybody had ever asked him about the technique that would come to define him. He was still searching for the words to verbalise just exactly what the hell it was he was doing.

"I was just sittin' in my room, drinkin' a beer, and I remembered seeing people stretching one note and hitting the note once. They popped the finger on there to hit one note. I said, well, fuck, nobody is really capitalising on that. Nobody was really doing more than just one stretch and one note real quick. So I started dickin' around and said, 'Fuck. This is a totally different technique that nobody really does.' Which it is. I haven't really seen anyone get into that as far as they could, because it is a totally different sound. A lot of people listen to that and they don't even think it's a guitar. 'Is that a synthesiser? A piano? What *is* that?'"

For Edward Van Halen, it was always about making things do what they weren't supposed to do; or rather what nobody *thought* they could do. Mutating guitars to sound like keyboards and twisting keyboards to sound like guitars. Jacking up amps with voltage generators to suck majestic tones from the cabs.

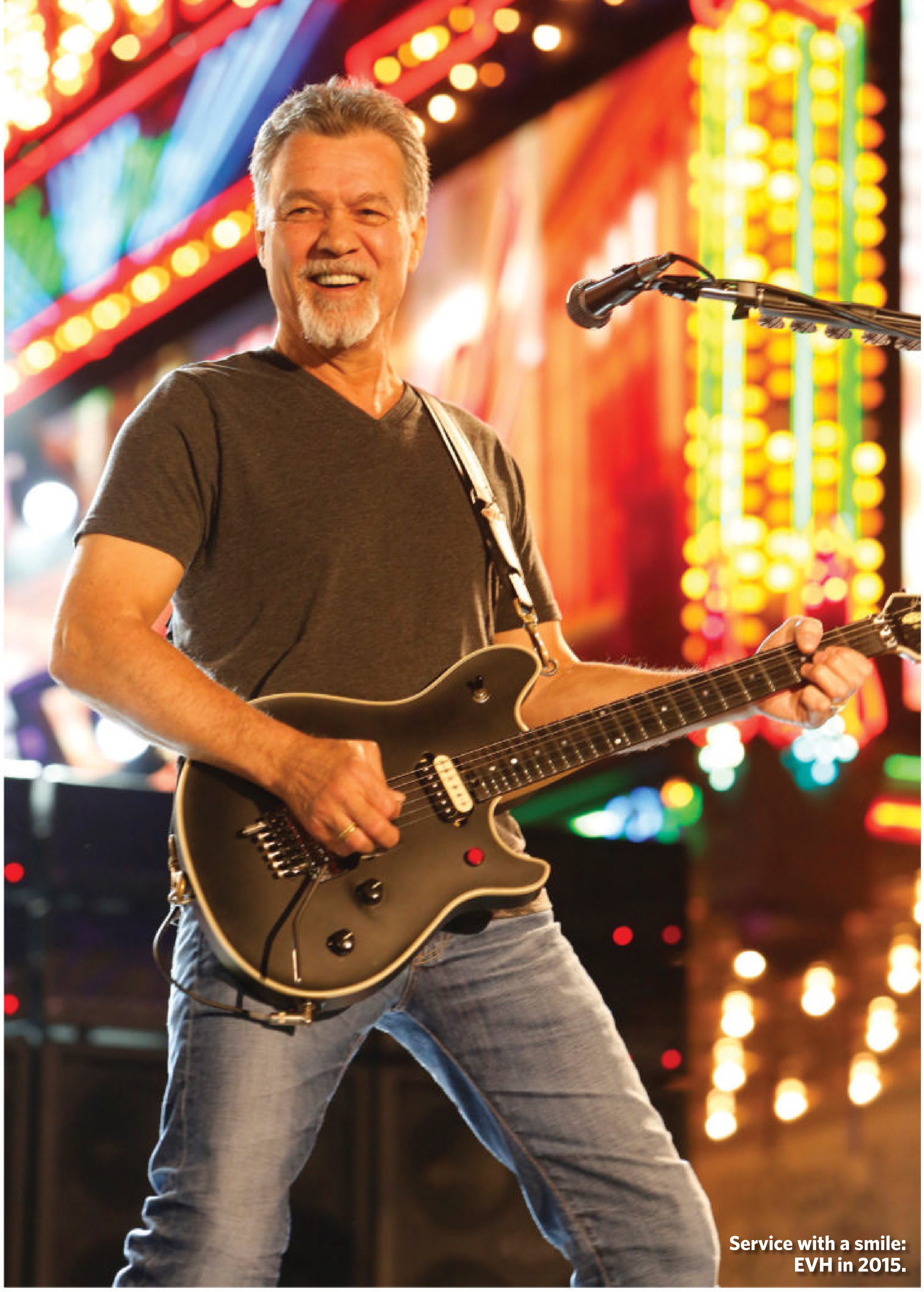
In the end, what you need to know about EVH is that every note he ever played came from a place deep inside his heart. It was all about honesty.

"I don't really try to do anything but something interesting and different than the last thing I did," he confessed. "I don't think I always succeed, but I try. I don't sit down and listen to our stuff and go: 'Is this different than the last one?' I don't care. Because what I come up with is what I come up with. I don't compare. I definitely do not write for anybody but myself."

MAIN: GETTY; INSET: ROSS HALFIN

"A lot of people don't even think it's a guitar. 'Is that a synthesiser? A piano? What is that?'"

Eddie Van Halen on his two-handed tapping technique



Service with a smile: EVH in 2015.

The shadow he has cast has been immeasurable. Arguably, he may be the most influential guitar player in history, standing first in line in front of Jimi Hendrix, Jeff Beck, Jimmy Page and any other legend you might care to mention.

It's a sentiment shared by many, including Jimi Hendrix's engineer Eddie Kramer. "He was an absolute genius," Kramer told us. "The finger tapping, the fire, the stage presence. He was a brilliant player, and it's a terrible loss for the musical world. He's certainly in the top five of all time. There's Beck and Page and Clapton. Eddie is definitely up there with those guys. I could hear bits and pieces of Jimi in what Eddie did, though the influence wasn't overt. I think what they really shared was the spirit and joy they both played with."

The body of work Eddie Van Halen created has changed the lives of everyone who has ever heard it. Whether its his early masterpieces with Dave Lee Roth at the helm, or later tours de force with Sammy Hagar front and centre, we mustn't forget the scope of Edward Van Halen's songwriting along with his guitar prowess. He was a rare and extraordinarily gifted individual, a musician nonpareil. He was a high-flying eagle, a great soaring bird, and there will never be anyone else like him.

Addendum: I spent more than 10 years hanging out with Edward and being his friend. He was brutally honest at times. If I was at his house and we were just talking about nothing and he wanted to noodle around on guitar, he'd tell me: "I'm going to work now. You should go." I used to take that personally but I came to realise that's just who he was.

In 1985, I asked him if could write his biography. He said: 'I can't think of anybody else who could do it.' I was blown away and touched beyond measure. I began my interviews [the quotes contained here from Alex Van Halen, Michael Anthony and Wayne Charvel are taken from those conversations originally conducted for the book] and worked for years compiling it. But the book never materialised, and it remains one of my greatest disappointments.

Sometime around 2000, Edward cut me out of his life. To this day, I don't know what happened or why. It shattered me for a long time, but I always held out hope that one day we might be friends again and the book might see the light of day. With his passing, of course, we will never speak again and there will be no book. I am profoundly saddened by that.

So I prefer to remember Edward Van Halen in sweeter times. I would like to remember accompanying him to a NAMM Show in New Orleans and attending his wedding to Valerie Bertinelli and introducing him to Ritchie Blackmore, Billy Gibbons and Les Paul.

He was my friend and I am so grateful for that.

This month The Dirt was compiled by Lee Dorrian, Polly Glass, Emma Johnston, Dave Ling, Steven Rosen

GETTY x2

What an incredible loss… truly an astonishing musician.
David Coverdale, Whitesnake

I saw Van Halen destroy Sabbath at the Sheffield City Hall in 1977. Eddie was a big part of that, having essentially reinvented guitar playing just like Jimi Hendrix had done a generation earlier.
Joe Elliott, Def Leppard

Thank you for the music and inspiration, the hotel and backstage jams, adventures and laughs.
Jerry Cantrell, Alice In Chains

Rest in peace Eddie! A true original.
Steve Jones

One of the absolute giants is gone. He influenced and inspired an entire generation, including myself. His legacy will always remain.
Yngwie Malmsteen

Eddie was such a great guitarist and I remember how big Van Halen was, especially here in LA. Love and Mercy to Eddie's family and friends.
Brian Wilson

One of the greatest, most inventive, truly visionary musicians of all time. An unparalleled titan in the annals of rock 'n' roll. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts for every spectacular note.
Tom Morello

It's so sad to hear about the passing of one of the best hard rock guitarists ever. The US Festival, the Monsters Of Rock… we've shared the stage so many times with Van Halen back in the 80s. What a great loss for the world of music.
Scorpions

It sounded like Eddie was from another planet and the energy from Van Halen was undeniable. Amazing songs too. Eddie was like Mozart for guitar. Changed everything and he played with soul.
Mike McCready, Pearl Jam

One of the greatest guitarists of all time!
Muse

RIP

Thank you and good night.

Jimmy Winston

April 20, 1945 – September 26, 2020

Former Small Faces drummer Kenney Jones has paid tribute to Jimmy Winston, the band's original keyboard player, who has died at the age of 75. Born in Stratford, James Edward Winston Langwith co-founded the band in 1965, and played on their first two singles before his place was taken by Ian McLagan. "Another life cut too short," said Jones. "I will miss Jimmy very much."

Gordon Haskell

April 27, 1946 – October 15, 2020

Although known best for his solo hit *How Wonderful You Are*, a UK No.2 single in 2001, Gordon Haskell also spent time fronting and playing bass for King Crimson during the early 1970s. Aged 74 at the time of his death caused by cancer, Haskell was also a member of the Southampton-based beat group the Fleur de Lys.

Steve York

April 24, 1948 – October 14, 2020

As bass player to the stars, Steve York worked with Eric Clapton, Mick Jagger, Chuck Berry, Manfred Mann, Ringo Starr, Pete Townshend and Gary Moore among many others. The cause of death is yet to be confirmed. "Steve was such a brilliant bassist and songwriter," said singer Elkie Brooks. "We had so many amazing crazy times back in Vinegar Joe."

Tony Lewis

December 21, 1957 – October 19, 2020

East Londoner Tony Lewis was the singer with The Outfield, one of the very few British melodic hard rock acts to find success in America during the 1980s when American artists dominated the genre. The quartet enjoyed five Top 40 hits in the US, including *Your Love*, but unfortunately remained little-known at home. Lewis was 62 years old when he died "suddenly and unexpectedly".

Dave Kusworth

March 26, 1960 – September 19, 2020

A staple of the UK's garage glam-rock'n'roll scene, Dave Kusworth formed his first band, TV Eye, in Birmingham in 1977. The guitarist went on to play with the Dogs D'Amour, The Jacobites, the Rag Dolls, the Bounty Hunters, The Tenderhooks and most recently the Dave Kusworth Group. The 60-year-old died in his sleep of as-yet unconfirmed causes.

Eddie Nash

August 19, 1940 – October 6, 2020

As well as known within pop music, Texas-born Eddie Nash was among the first non-Jamaican artists to record reggae music in Kingston. In 1972 he scored a huge hit with *I Can See Clearly Now*, later covered by acts as diverse as Ray Charles, Soul Asylum, Jimmy Cliff and Donny Osmond. Nash was 80 years old when he died of natural causes at his home in Houston.

Mark Stone

Died September 26, 2020

Van Halen's original bassist has passed away after a battle with cancer. Stone attributed his exit from Van Halen to a battle between academic studies and music, admitting: "Basically, I couldn't keep up with [the band]."

Mac Davis

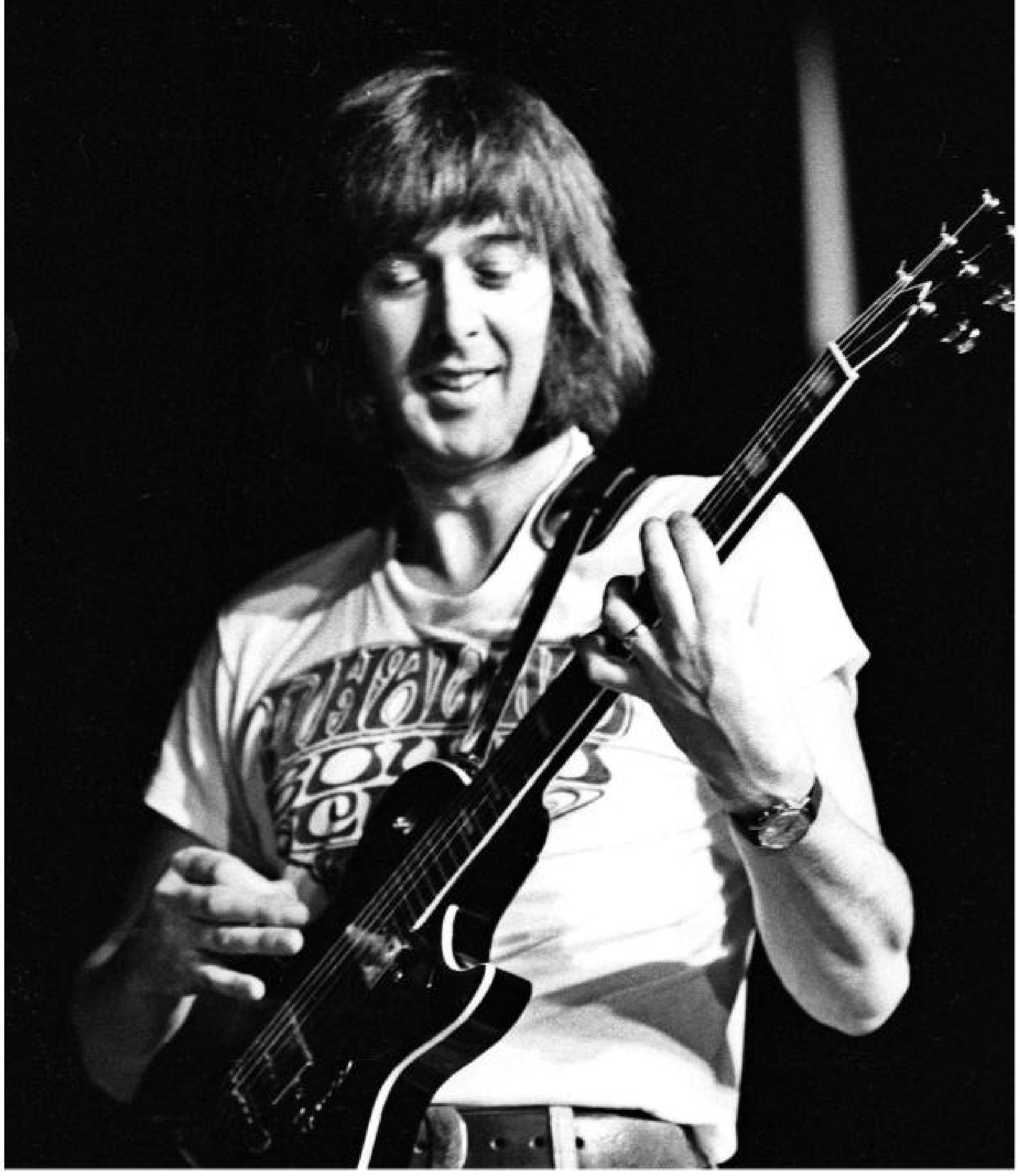
January 21, 1942 – September 29, 2020

Nashville-based country rock singer-songwriter Mac Davis (pictured) has died of a heart attack. He was 78. In addition to his own hits *Baby Don't Get Hooked On Me* and *It's Hard To Be Humble*, Davis wrote *A Little Less Conversation*, made famous by Elvis Presley.

Pierre Kezdy

January 4, 1962 – October 9, 2020

Illinois native Kezdy was the bass player with Naked Raygun, the anthemic punks championed by Dave Grohl, producer Steve Albini and Green Day. Aged 58 when he died, he had been suffering from cancer.



Spencer Davis

July 17, 1939 – October 19, 2020

As this issue of *Classic Rock* went to press, Spencer Davis, best known as leader and guitarist of the Spencer Davis Group, died in hospital while being treated for pneumonia. He was 81 years old.

The news was confirmed by Spencer Davis Group drummer Pete York, who said: "Spencer was a lovely man – always very courteous and a purist about music."

Steve Winwood, the keyboard player, vocalist and guitarist with whom Davis co-founded the Spencer Davis Group, called Spencer "a man with a vision", adding: "He was among the pioneers of the British invasion of America in the 1960s. I never went to the US with Spencer, but he later embraced America, and America embraced him.

"Spencer was an early pioneer of the British folk scene, which in his case embraced folk blues and eventually what was then called rhythm and blues. He influenced my tastes in music, he owned the first 12-string guitar I ever saw, and he was taken with the music of Huddie 'Lead Belly' Ledbetter and Big Bill Broonzy. I'd already got a big brother who influenced me greatly, and Spencer became like a big brother to me at the time."

Davis, Winwood, York and bassist Muff Winwood formed the Spencer Davis Group in Birmingham in 1963. Early in their career their electrifying mix of jazz, soul and R&B scored them UK No.1 hits with *Keep On Running* and *Somebody Help Me*, both written by Jamaican songwriter Jackie Edward, and their first three albums all made the Top 10.

But the band were to strike gold on both sides of the Atlantic that same year with *Gimme Some Lovin'*, an exhilarating three minutes of prime 60s pop that has been covered by a range of artists including the Grateful Dead and Thunder. Remarkably, the song came together in less than an hour.

Talking about its creation, Davis said: "Muff Winwood played this bass riff at me. I thought it was nice, so I added some ascending chords while I told him to keep playing it. I started playing minor chords, but guitarist and vocalist Steve Winwood went: 'No, play majors.' Then – bang! It worked. There were no lyrics at that point."

"Sometimes there's that little bit of magic that you can't put your finger on, but it happens and it just works. *Gimme Some Lovin'* came really fast", said Muff.

Steve Winwood left to form Traffic in 1967, and the Spencer Davis Group split two years later. They reuniting in the early 1970s for the albums *Gluggo* and *Living In A Back Street*, neither of which featured Steve Winwood. Davis later hooked up again with Spencer Davis Group pianist Eddie Hardin in 2005 for live shows.

Traffic's Dave Mason described the Spencer Davis Group as "one of the great English blues/R&B-influenced bands" adding: "I spent three months prior to Traffic playing roadie for them, and also sang on three of their hit records, singing harmony on *Somebody Help Me, I'm A Man* and *Gimme Some Lovin'*."

Bill Wyman described Davis as "a very kind, humorous, and friendly man".

Michael Des Barres wrote: "Spencer Davis will be remembered for a lot more than discovering Steve Winwood. He and a handful of others created British blues. Spencer exemplified the notion that a nice guy can survive in a three-chord world."

Edgar Broughton said: "*Keep On Running* was the song that introduced me to the wonderful world of fuzz guitar. Spencer was one of the first white men to capture the essence of the blues and introduce it to a wider audience." **DL**

GETTY x2

marillion
the light at the end
of the tunnel tour
NOVEMBER
SUN 14 HULL CITY HALL
MON 15 EDINBURGH USHER HALL
WED 17 CARDIFF ST DAVID'S HALL
THU 18 MANCHESTER BRIDGEWATER HALL
SAT 20 CAMBRIDGE CORN EXCHANGE
SUN 21 BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY HALL
TUE 23 LIVERPOOL PHILHARMONIC
WED 24 BATH FORUM
FRI 26 LONDON EVENTIM APOLLO HAMMERSMITH
SAT 27 LONDON EVENTIM APOLLO HAMMERSMITH
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Is Gig Drought End In Sight?

Promoter suggests Easter return.

Concert promoter Stuart Galbraith, the boss of Kilimanjaro Live, has earmarked a date as a possible target for the return of full-capacity live gigs. "The date that we should be pushing for is April 8, " he told *Music Week*, "because it's immediately after Easter and I think the government should find that acceptable – it will fit in with political and society agendas. Being midweek, it's not a date you're going to see people go crazy on, like a Saturday. We could ease into it."

However, some less optimistic industry experts predict that while next year's summer festivals could be viable, they view the following spring as more realistic.

Since the last issue of *Classic Rock*, more than 1,300 theatres, music venues, galleries, festivals, museums and other cultural organisations were told they would receive a segment of a government's Culture Recovery Fund of £257 million. However, a new report predicts that almost 170,000 UK live-sector jobs are likely to be lost by the end of this year. This figure represents almost half of the sector's full-time workforce. An additional 144,000 'full-time equivalent' jobs will also vanish. **DL**

Iron Maiden

New Iron Maiden Album Ahead?

Bruce reveals the band have been writing and been in the studio.

Bruce Dickinson has given strong hints that perhaps a new Iron Maiden album is not too far away. The band's singer posted a video message during which he teased: "There's going to be some great stuff happening in the near future."

"We're doing bits of writing," he said. "I'm talking to Steve [Harris, bassist]. We've been working together a little bit in the studio. On what, I can't tell you because they'd have to kill me."

Maiden's most recent studio album was *The Book Of Souls* in 2015. The band hope to resume touring in June.

Meanwhile, the band's guitarist Adrian Smith has told *Classic Rock*'s sister title *Metal Hammer* that he suffered from depression during his first spell with Maiden on tour in the 80s.

"When we hit America things really kicked in with booze and drugs, using it as a crutch," Smith admitted. "But you need to deal with those things, and knowing that now means I don't have the same struggles. It's all part of the process of growing up." **DL**

NEWS

Tony Iommi and **Nick Mason** have teamed up to record a song for an as-yet unspecified cancer charity. Iommi recently revealed: "I think Ronnie Wood is going to play a bit on this track as well. A lot of other celebrities are doing something for it."

Guitarist Steve Lukather and singer Joseph Williams have a new line-up of **Toto**. Joining them are bassist John Pierce, drummer Robert Searight, keyboard players Steve Maggiora and Dominique Taplin and multi-instrumentalist/vocalist Warren Ham.

Jaz Coleman is selling a brand of pies and hot sauce. The Killing Joke frontman aims "to reinvent pie and mash, dragging it kicking and screaming into the twenty-first century" with jerk chicken, red peppers and chilli in a gluten-free pastry called The Joker, and a vegetarian option named The Harlequin.

An expanded and remastered edition of **George Thorogood And The Destroyers**' album *Live In Boston 1982* is released on December 4 via Snakefarm Records. *Live in Boston, 1982: The Complete Concert* comprises 27 songs from that show, 12 of which, including *Bad To The Bone, Who Do You Love?* and *Cocaine Blues*, are available for the first time.

Richie Sambora (pictured) won't rule out making a return to Bon Jovi for what he calls "a special situation". The guitarist reveals: "I'm certainly not counting it out. I have no malice toward that band."

WELCOME BACK

Jeff Scott Soto

The genre-hopping veteran vocalist and Sons Of Apollo frontman re-enters the spotlight with a new solo album.

Having arrived on the scene in the early 1980s as Yngwie Malmsteen's singer, New York-born Jeff Scott Soto has spent almost four decades alternating between hard rock, metal, funk and AOR, including fronting Journey from 2006-07. Three years ago he joined the prog-rock supergroup Sons Of Apollo. Here he previews *Wide Awake (In My Dreamland)*, his seventh solo album, .

With more than eighty albums under your belt, including collaborations, is it fair to say that many people still don't have a handle on the real Jeff Scott Soto?
I wish that my wallet reflected the size of my catalogue [laughs]. My diversity is influenced by Queen, who built their own walls and then knocked them down. And you're right, it's a blessing and a curse.

"My speciality these days is melodies and lyrics."

Have you ever tried to suppress your genre-hopping tendencies?
Absolutely not. I love hearing somebody like Mike Portnoy [from Sons Of Apollo] say that I'm the first person to inject soul into prog music.

After two records with Sons Of Apollo, is there a prog album of your own within you?
It ain't gonna happen. Sons Of Apollo is the absolute perfect vehicle for me within that genre. There's no way I could take it on or beat it.

***Wide Awake (In My Dreamland)* is smooth hard rock with a muscular metal twist. Frontiers Records are known as a specialist melodic label; did they try to strong-arm you into making a particular type of album?**
Not at all. They're very much aware that I make all of these different kinds of records. But it was Alessandro Del Vecchio [the label's in-house composer and producer] who wrote the music. My speciality these days is melodies and lyrics. Alessandro dove right into what he loves about my identity and set out to make the kind of record he thinks the fans would want to hear.

A second disc adds a live set from 2019. You say from the stage that a more catalogue-based set is far more satisfying to perform.
Yeah, it frees me up to throw the kitchen sink of everything that I've done into one performance.

On the live disc, Dino Jelusick from the band Animal Drive joins you for a riotous rendition of *Stand Up*, the Steel Dragon song from the film *Rock Star*.
Trying to mentor Dino, who is an incredible talent, gives me a lot of pleasure. At his age I wish I'd had somebody to help me with vital early decisions. And I still love singing *Stand Up*. It's a great way to end a show.

Back in March, Sons Of Apollo had begun a European tour when coronavirus forced its postponement.
That whole thing really sucked. None of us wanted not only to get stuck in Europe but to possibly end up in hospital. Those dates have been rescheduled three times, but we have zero idea of when they might happen. It's heartbreaking.

What else is in the pipeline from you?
Retransmission, from [melodic supergroup] W.E.T., is out in January, I'm on [Whitesnake's] Joel Hoekstra's new album, and there's a special project that I can't tell you about until it's green-lit. **DL**

Wide Awake (In My Dreamland) is available now via Frontiers.

IRON MAIDEN: JOHN McMURTRIE/PRESS

“I’d like to think the album is a bit Bad Company-ish.”

★ HIGH HOPES

When Rivers Meet

Taking in Delta blues, classic rock giants and a Meat Loaf tribute band, these rivers run deep.

LIKE MANY GOOD ideas, When Rivers Meet began in a pub. Guitarist Aaron Bond and singer/resonator mandolin player Grace Bond met when Aaron was a punter at his local watering hole in Norfolk and Grace was behind the bar pulling pints (when she wasn’t touring with a Meat Loaf tribute). They locked eyes on Grace’s first shift and never looked back.

“It sounds really pukey,” Grace says, grimacing, “but… we *knew* each other straight away. But Aaron’s not the sort of person who’s gonna chat you up; I got a few texts saying: ‘Y’alright, *mate*!’”

“Our very first conversation was about Elvis Presley,” Aaron recalls. “And the blues as well; John Lee Hooker’s one of my favourite artists, and Muddy Waters.”

Between them the Bonds cover a generous spread of influences, many of which filter into their debut album *We Fly Free*, a hooky, dirty mix of flaming Delta licks and Fleetwood Mac-come-White Stripes leanings. Initially their common ground was 1930s blues, but that expanded to classic blues-rock giants such as Cream, Free and Led Zeppelin. Grace also brought Bonnie Raitt to the table, while Aaron came with an arsenal of Guns N’ Roses chops.

For the next five years they played in separate groups, then they got married. It was “about then” that they started writing together, playing with tones until musical sparks began to fly. By 2018 they’d settled on a name. Inspired, they gave up their day jobs and “decided to go for it”, driving across the country to play pubs, festivals and for biker crowds at Hells Angels Christmas parties.

“We bought a van and converted it ourselves so we could tour and… go and *play*,” they explain. “Find out what people like, write stuff and just see how people react to it”.

Music runs deep for both of them. Aaron was raised on artists including The Beatles, Elvis and Buddy Holly, before joining various rock bands (“covers, mostly”). Grace was learning piano by the age of four, all the while ingesting her father’s Motown and soul records. “And I played flute, saxophone, clarinet,” she says, “and it just evolved. I went into country bands, did backing singing for cover bands and the Meat Loaf tribute. Which led to us.”

So far the potential pitfalls of being in a band with one’s spouse don’t seem to apply. “We do argue – we’re not weird!” Grace says with a laugh. “But we love the same music. Our rule when we’re writing songs is [to each other]: ‘Do you absolutely fucking *love* it?’ And if you don’t, we’re like: ‘Okay, scrap it.’”

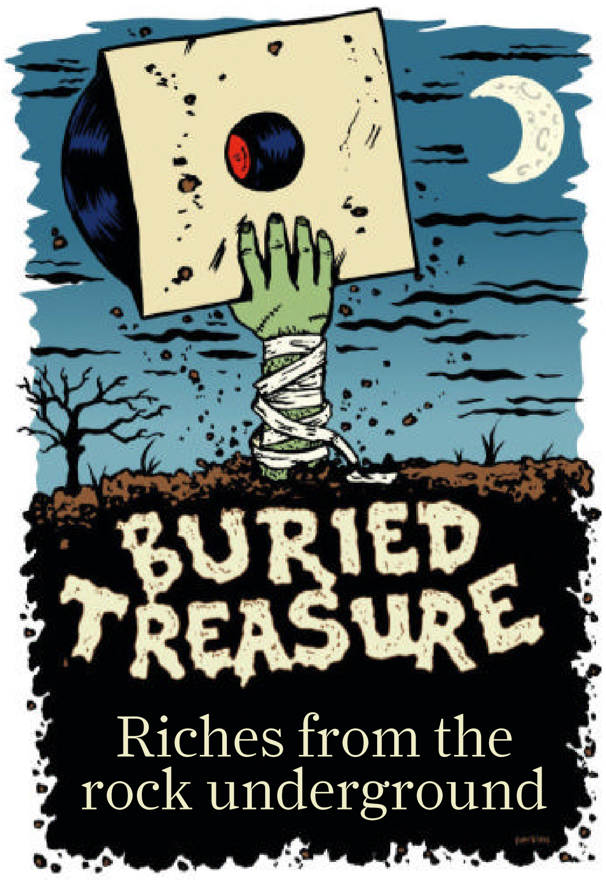
For all their down-to-earth chattiness off stage, on stage they channel the commanding hoodoo of their bluesy heroes, along with their own artful fairy dust. “We want to put on a show,” Aaron says. “We don’t want people to go: ‘Oh, it looks like a rehearsal’ or something. We want it to be an experience.” **PG**

We Fly Free is out on November 20 (self-released).

FOR FANS OF…

“I’d like to think it’s a bit Bad Company-ish,” Grace says of *We Fly Free*. “We didn’t want the album to be too produced, and we definitely didn’t want it to be ‘perfect’. Bands like Bad Company just do that so well, where they keep their energy. We didn’t want it to be so perfect that you lose the energy and the vibe.”

ROB BLACKHAM/PRESS



TWENTY SIXTY SIX AND THEN

Reflections Of The Future, United Artists Records, Germany, 1972. £1,000+

Twenty Sixty Six And Then (a name concocted by adding 1,000 years to the famous 1066 Battle of Hastings) were a pretty short-lived band, lasting just over 16 months. However, during that time they recorded one of the jewels of underground German progressive rock.

Reflections Of The Future features some great, often bizarre psychedelic Krautrock moments. The pinnacle of this glorious madness is the seven-minute mini-epic *Butterking*. Through voice-affected narration, singing and panning, Manchester born vocalist Geff Harrison recreates the moment he looked a butterfly in the eye before engaging in conversation and embarking on a mind-bending journey to the land of butterflies.

'One of the jewels of underground German progressive rock.'

Here he witnesses Butterking talking down to man, and the devil with a voice of thunder. All this is recited over a backdrop of pounding prog aided by Mellotron brass, military beats and Cossack-dancing mayhem.

Opening track *At My Home* is an almost typical example of prog mixed with hard rock, featuring flute and Hammond. The title track is a 15-minute suite that moves between and electronic drones, hard rock and complex time signatures. Harrison and guitarist Gagey Mrozek quit the band to join Kin Ping Meh, while other members went on to popular German bands including Abacus and Kathargo

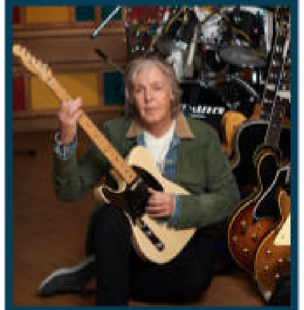
A genuine cult classic. **LD**

NEWS

The six-year-long plagiarism legal case over **Led Zeppelin**'s *Stairway To Heaven* is finally over. The US Supreme Court has declined to hear the case, thus closing the matter for good.

Luke Spiller of The Struts has put himself forward for the role of Joe Elliott in any future **Def Leppard** biopic. "I wanna see a Leppard film done properly," he says (an MTV attempt from 2001 is widely derided). "Just to put it out there – I could dye my hair blond and put on the Union Jack sleeveless shirt." Elliott and Leppard guitarist Phil Collen appear on The Struts' new song *I Hate How Much I Want You*.

Celebrating their 45th anniversary, the original line-up of **The Damned** – Dave Vanian (vocals), Brian James (guitar), Captain Sensible (reverting to bass) and Rat Scabies (drums) – are regrouping for a one-off tour. They play London Hammersmith Apollo Jul 9, Birmingham Academy 16, Glasgow Academy 17 and Manchester Apollo 18.



Fifty years after his debut solo album *McCartney* and 40 after *McCartney II*, Paul McCartney (pictured) releases *McCartney III* on December 11 via Capitol Records. It was recorded in his home studio and he wrote, performed and produced everything.

Former Uriah Heep and Blackfoot guitarist/organist **Ken Hensley** releases a new studio album, *My Book Of Answers*, in January via Cherry Red Records.

WELCOME BACK

Kerbdog

Timing is everything. With their albums reissued and a tour planned, maybe it's the right time for a resurrection.

Formed in Kilkenny, Ireland in 1991, Kerbdog were the right band with the right albums at the wrong time. Their self-titled debut and its excellent follow-up *On The Turn* were blistering alt.rock gems that flew under the radar on release but went on to influence a generation of British and Irish bands. With those albums now reissued on coloured vinyl, frontman Cormac Battle looks back on frustrations, near misses, and the band's resurrection as an inspiration to many.

What's the thinking behind the reissues?
When we came back from making *On The Turn*, if you weren't part of that Britpop war you were absolutely ignored. It limped out and we were dropped. The vinyl end of things were deleted, they didn't produce any more. But recently people were selling the original ones for three hundred pounds on ebay. That's where the guys who are putting it out saw there was an interest. When we got dropped, we stopped immediately, but by word of mouth it started to gather its own head of steam. It had its own life without us knowing that it was happening out there.

"If you weren't part of that Britpop war you were ignored."

How do you feel when you listen back to the records now?
I wouldn't listen to our records for years and years. Even if somebody at a party would put on one of our songs, I'd turn it off, because I associated it with crushing disappointment. Especially when our second record came out, I really thought we had a special record, and it just felt like it was a missed opportunity that people didn't get to hear it. I associated the records with failure, a really deep sense of loss. I can listen to them now, though, and I'm very proud of those records.

What was the mood like in the studio back then?
The first one was great to make. It was like making an extended demo. But *On The Turn* we made stratospheric leaps in terms of what we could do. It was like living a dream, because we were over in Los Angeles, I was twenty-two, twenty-three, from a small town in southern Ireland. We were recording in the same room where *Nevermind* was recorded. We were working with [producer] Garth Richardson who did Rage Against The Machine's debut album. So the whole experience was completely magical.

Kerbdog were very influential on a lot of the bands that came out of the UK and Ireland in the early 2000s.
Yeah. Frank Turner and Biffy Clyro in particular talk about us. I've met the boys in Biffy at a festival. When they met me it was like they were meeting one of their fucking heroes. It was bizarre. It's very, very flattering to have had that influence.

Is there a tour planned?
We've tentatively put something in for 2022. It is fantastic to do that because it doesn't come along with any of the pressures of a fledgling band, it's just us playing our records to people who like them. We were just four friends who went to school together and could half-play our instruments. And that's still true!

On your radio show, are you committed to exposing new bands?
Yeah, absolutely. I always put myself in the position of a young band who'd made a new record. I understand how much is riding on it for them. **EJ**

The Kerbdog and On The Turn reissues are available now via Hassle Hindsight.

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Saxon

747 (Strangers In The Night)

Inspired by a BBC documentary and Frank Sinatra, Biff Byford wrote lyrics for a song that would soon become one of the band's biggest hits and greatest anthems: *747 (Strangers In The Night)*.

Words: **Dom Lawson**

The Great Northeast blackout took place on November 9, 1965. Due to disastrous technical problems, electricity supplies to thousands of people in Canada and the US, were cut abruptly for 13 hours. Alarmingly, this included power supplies to airport runway lights, forcing countless planes to be re-routed elsewhere.

Fast forward to 1979. Saxon frontman Biff Byford is watching a BBC documentary about the blackout, and suddenly has a cool idea for a song. Within a matter of days, Saxon had *747 (Strangers In The Night)*. It would soon become one of the band's biggest hits and greatest anthems.

"I was watching this documentary and somehow it all just went in, you know?" Byford recalls. "I'd heard another song with a lyric about *'riding on a 747'* and that was stuck in my head, and it all seemed to come together naturally.

"I came up with the melody for the chorus first. I think I wrote that arpeggio in the chorus with the words *'Strangers in the night'* in there. I probably got the idea from the [1966] Frank Sinatra song – the syllables were the same. I'm a big Sinatra fan. I like his phrasing. So when that riff came along, it all fitted together really nicely."

Saxon released their self-titled debut album in May 1979, to no great acclaim but plenty of encouraging ripples of enthusiasm from a steadily growing UK heavy metal scene. Less than a year later, Saxon recorded *Wheels Of Steel*, their now-classic second album and one of the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal's unimpeachable benchmarks.

A relentless barrage of riff-driven classics, *Wheels Of Steel* was the moment when Saxon cemented their identity as masters of thunderous shout-alongs like *Motorcycle Man* and *Wheels Of Steel* and more overtly melodic hard rock material like *747 (Strangers In The Night)*.

"*Wheels Of Steel* was definitely an eighties album, without a doubt," says Byford. "We had no sense of destiny or anything, but we knew we had some great songs. We knew we'd done something great, but we didn't know we'd written a defining album for that era."

In truth, 1980 was a crucial year for metal, as *Wheels Of Steel* shared shelf- space with *Ace Of Spades, Back In Black, Heaven And Hell, Iron Maiden, Blizzard Of Ozz* and *British Steel*, to name a few seminal records released within those 12 months.

But even in such commanding company, *747 (Strangers In The Night)* stood out as an unexpectedly subtle and affecting piece of songcraft, one that offered something distinctly different from the burgeoning metal scene's usual lyrical preoccupations of fantasy, horror and partying.

"I must admit there was a lot of street fighting and girls in our lyrics, for sure," Byford says with a chuckle. "But *747* was always a melancholy song. It had to be. I had this image of the power cut as you're coming in to land, and the airport lights blink out. These planes were being diverted elsewhere and the city's in darkness. I thought that was a powerful idea.

"I also thought it was quite cool that strangers were meeting in the blackout. They say that there was a baby boom nine months later. I imagine there was a lot of looting, too. So I just put the two together, really. Some parts of the lyrics don't make sense logistically, I know, but it just came together that way. It was a moment of magic."

> **"I still like that song and I still get off on the audience loving it. That's what we're all there for."**

Wheels Of Steel was released in May 1980 and became an instant hit, reaching No.5 in the UK and having similar success across Europe. The album's popularity was plainly helped by the fact that the proudly radio-friendly *747 (Strangers In The Night)* was released as a single in June and rocketed up the UK chart, peaking just outside the Top 10 and earning Saxon an invitation to appear on legendary TV chart show *Top Of The Pops*. Unfortunately, things didn't quite work out.

"We never did *Top Of The Pops* for that song because the BBC went on strike!" Byford laughs, ruefully. "It probably would have got a lot higher in the charts if we'd done it. We were looking at the top five, to be honest. But then the cameramen went on strike. *Top Of The Pops* was like the British MTV. If you did it, you crossed over quite a bit. But we did it with *Wheels Of Steel* and a few other songs, and it was good to be in there with everything else."

Despite being denied the chance to arse about in front of the *TOTP* cameras, Saxon were bona-fide pop stars by the time 1980 turned into '81. *747 (Strangers In The Night)* eventually peaked at No.13 in the singles chart, a major achievement for a heavy metal band in any era. More importantly, it was embraced enthusiastically by Saxon's fans and has long since been regarded as one of the defining metal songs of the 80s.

"Melodically we made a real statement with that song," says Byford. "It was the biggest song from the album that went mega and it helped to make us even bigger. But 1980 was an extraordinary year for songwriting in general, I think. You had Motörhead and Whitesnake and Priest, who were all already massively established, and then these new bands like us and Maiden were thrown in too.

"Suddenly we're on the radio and TV all the time, and not just in the UK but across Europe. Honestly, I can tell you that a lot of American bands were listening to what was happening and getting influenced by it."

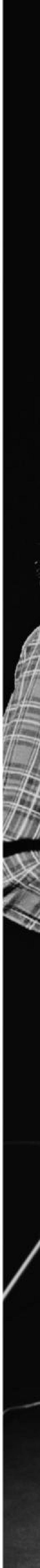
Four decades on, Saxon were celebrating their 40th anniversary, focusing on material from the band's first few classic records. And yes, they told us at the time, they would be performing *747 (Strangers In The Night)* every night, as they have done at nearly every Saxon show since those chart-bothering days in the early 80s.

"It might be hard to believe, but we have dropped it from the set a couple of times," Byford says. "If we do a short set-list it sometimes gets lost. It would be unfair to audiences if we didn't play *747*. I still like that song and I still get off on the audience loving it. That's what we're all there for, isn't it?"

FLYING HIGH. WELL, NOT *TOO* HIGH

As any iron Maiden fan will tell you, aviation is a great subject for heavy metal song. But Biff Byford cheerfully admits that he's never had any serious plans to fly a plane himself.

"I never liked flying. I was always a nervous flyer," he says. "I still don't like it, but I've got used to it now. It always used to affect my ears really badly, especially if I sang on the day we flew into somewhere. I'd find I was singing in the wrong key. But I'm okay with it. I've flown on a lot of 747s, put it that way. Ha!"



GETTY

1980s Saxon really took off with the release of *747*'s parent album *Wheels Of Steel*.

THE FACTS

RELEASE DATE
June 21, 1980

HIGHEST CHART POSITION
UK No.13

PERSONNEL
Biff Byford
Vocals
Paul Quinn
Guitar
Graham Oliver
Guitar
Steve Dawson
Bass
Pete Gill
Drums

WRITTEN BY
Biff Byford, Paul Quinn, Graham Oliver, Steve Dawson and Pete Gill

PRODUCED BY
Nigel Thomas

LABEL
Capitol

Q&A

Perry Farrell

The Jane's Addiction main man on his new box set, becoming a quarter of an inch taller, and the power of PG Tips.

Words: **Dave Everley**

Perry Farrell isn't naturally inclined to look backwards, but he's making an exception today. A lavish, multi-disc new box set, *The Glitz; The Glamour*, charts the Jane's Addiction frontman's resolutely maverick career away from the alt.rock godfathers, from early-80s goth band Psi-Com to last year's solo album-come-aural three-ring circus *Kind Heaven*. "I had music spread out everywhere," he says of his decision to finally bring everything together. "It's been a wild ride, man." Today, speaking via Zoom from his home in LA, the 61-year-old sounds a little hoarse – the result of a recent operation on his vertebrae, it turns out.

How did your operation go?
It was successful. I have crushed discs in my neck, mostly from partying and leaning back my head to rip out notes, and surfing and dancing around… There's a long list. They had to remove my voice box and put it on a table. That was daunting. They literally exposed my skeleton, took the discs out and put in artificial discs. So now I am a quarter inch taller and twice as attractive to my wife.

The new box set starts with your early-eighties band Psi-Com. What do you miss about those days?
Being way out there. I miss the fertility of the music scene. You could get in there and be original. If you had a story, if you had enthusiasm, if you had something to say, then people accepted you. Everybody was strange, everybody was disenfranchised. A germ here, a germ there, an amoeba here, a perimysium there, a Perry Farrell in there too. In Los Angeles every kid looked like they were in a group. It was Halloween every day.

The box set jumps forward to 2000's *Song Yet To Be Sung* album, for which you ditched rock and embraced electronic music. Were you bored with guitars?
I didn't *not* like rock. But I don't like derivativeness. It bores my ears. So when I was hearing derivative riff-rock, it was, like: "No, we can't do that." I'd heard The Orb and Orbital when I went to London in 1992. I started to go to nightclubs. It was mind-blowing what the DJs were doing. For me it's not digital versus analogue. What I like to do is to use music in the way of alchemy, where I put in all these different ingredients. I like to glitch familiarity.

A few years later you teamed up with guitarist Nuno Bettencourt in Satellite Party – the guy from Jane's Addiction and the guy from Extreme. No one saw that coming.
We bonded over great guitar players: Tom Morello, Brian May, the guy who plays for Ozzy… Guitar players have made respect for him [Bettencourt]. It turns out his production technique is really great.

Neither *Song Yet To Be Sung* nor the Satellite Party album were massively successful. What happened?
Song Yet To Be Sung was a beautiful record. When I was writing it, everybody was looking forward to it. I went and brought a lot of new clothes for the stage, brand new suitcases. And then, boom, the record label went down. With Satellite Party, I thought: "I'm gonna take that suitcase I never got to use and use it now." And then – boom – everybody got fired at the label again. You can push things through if you're a pop artist, but I am not. I'm not Cardi B.

Apart from the box set, what are you up to now?
With covid, there are all these musicians just sitting around at home, dying to play. Right now I have a track going with Taylor Hawkins from the Foo Fighters, Nick Mayberry from [Farrell's latest solo backing group] Kind Heaven Orchestra, Chris Chaney from Jane's Addiction. I have a friend called David Bryan, he's the keyboard player in Bon Jovi. He laid some keyboards on it. And lastly Elliott Easton from The Cars jumped on it. The track's called *Mend*. It's about a friend of ours who has had a bad break-up. But it's also about the world mending. My anticipation is that after the election we're gonna need healing music, music to mend.

How are you feeling about the election?
I'm gonna stay positive, because if we stay positive and stay focused I think we can beat this guy. I go back to the internet, to this worldwide web we've woven. It's given us our share of problems and trolls and misinformation. However, I like to look at what good it can do, and the good I see it doing is that it gets to spread the message. I feel like we're faster than they [Trump supporters] are. We've got a faster hard drive. We've got the truth on our side.

Where do Jane's Addiction fit in to your future plans? Will there ever be a new Jane's album?
I wouldn't think albums, I'd think songs. We've got so much Jane's material in the can. We'll be releasing a couple of tracks, maybe writing some new ones. Not this year, cos we're getting late in the year. But I can tell you in the next month or so I'm gonna be finishing up a couple of Jane's Addiction tracks.

You're sixty-one. Do you ever wake up and think: "How the hell did that happen?"
I guess it's luck of the draw. I've overdosed numerous times, been lost at sea… They just keep sending me back. I don't question it.

Might there be a *Bohemian Rhapsody*-style movie of your life?
I kind of like the idea. I used to think: "Hey, if there's a Perry Farrell movie, I want to play Perry Farrell." [Mock-sad] Now I'm too old.

But you're still as skinny as you were in Psi-Com days. What's the secret?
[Raises a mug and a biscuit to the screen] PG Tips. I love it. With condensed milk. My wife is from Hong Kong. I get the British influence with the Asian influence. [Peering at the biscuit] What is this?

It looks like a chocolate digestive.
That's what it is! PG Tips and chocolate digestives. That's the secret.

The Glitz; The Glamour is available now via Last Man Music.

"I've overdosed numerous times, been lost at sea... They just keep sending me back."

WALID AZAMI/PRESS

LET THERE BE ROCK. AGAIN

They'd lost Malcolm. Brian was out. Phil was in trouble with the law. Cliff had retired. Despite a successful tour with Axl Rose, it looked like **AC/DC**'s high voltage had been unplugged for good. Not so. Angus Young and Brian Johnson talk exclusively to *Classic Rock* about the resurrection of the greatest hard rock'n'roll band ever.

Words: **Paul Elliott** Photos: **Josh Cheuse**

In the end it all came down to one simple thing: Angus Young could not imagine a life without the band in which he has played lead guitar since 1973. He was just 18 when he formed AC/DC with his brother Malcolm on rhythm guitar. All of 47 years later, this band is still what he lives for. As he says now: "It's part of what you are."

AC/DC's new album, *Power Up*, is dedicated to the memory of Malcolm Young, Angus's elder brother and former AC/DC rhythm guitarist, who died in 2017. It's also testimony to the staying power of Angus, and his determination to carry on as his brother had wished, making good on a promise he made when Malcolm was near the end of his life.

There's a reassuringly familiar look to the AC/DC line-up in 2020. Alongside Angus are three long-serving veterans: singer Brian Johnson, who replaced the late Bon Scott in 1980, bassist Cliff Williams, ever-present since 1977, and drummer Phil Rudd, in the band on and off, but mostly on, since 1974. And on rhythm guitar, keeping it in the family, is Stevie Young, Angus's nephew, only two years his junior. Stevie first played with AC/DC on a 1988 tour when Malcolm was in rehab, and was the only guy considered for the job in 2014 after Malcolm's struggle with dementia forced him to withdraw from the band.

Equally reassuring is the sound of *Power Up* (or *PWR/UP* as its sleeve will tell you). As signposted by the lead single *Shot In The Dark*, this is AC/DC as they have always been: the riffs lean and mean, the boogie heavy, choruses shouted out, and Johnson still sounding, as Angus once said, like a guy who's had a truck dropped on his foot. With a classic, no-frills production by Brendan O'Brien, who worked on the preceding *Black Ice* and *Rock Or Bust*, *Power Up* is straight-shooting hard rock'n'roll from the masters of the art.

"This one's for Mal. I always think he's part of it, you know? He's still with us in spirit. I still feel the presence."

Angus Young

While the album sounds like business as usual, the story of the band in recent years has been anything but. Ever since Malcolm stepped down in the early stages of his illness, leaving Angus to lead the band, it's been a bumpy ride. Twice, Angus has had to shuffle his pack. First when Phil Rudd was sidelined ahead of the *Rock Or Bust* tour in 2014, following his arrest on charges of attempting to procure a murder, threatening to kill, and possession of controlled drugs. In Rudd's absence, Angus turned to Chris Slade, who first played with AC/DC in 1990. Then, halfway through that tour, with Brian Johnson unable to continue, having sustained ear damage that threatened to render him permanently deaf, Angus had to bring in a substitute, Guns N' Roses singer Axl Rose, to finish the job. Then when that troubled tour reached its end in September 2016, Cliff Williams had announced his retirement, commenting that it wasn't the same, that the band was "a changed animal", without Brian and Phil and Malcolm. At that point it seemed that the future of AC/DC was out of Angus's hands. He still had Stevie to call on, and Chris Slade if required, but Williams's decision appeared final, Rudd was in a bad place, and Johnson feared he might never sing again.

With the band in disarray, Angus was also experiencing the worst of times in his personal life. In the last months of 2017 he lost Malcolm, just a few weeks after the death of their elder brother George, who, as a former star of Australian band The Easybeats and as co-producer of AC/DC's early albums, had been a major influence on their lives.

The band had achieved more than Angus could ever have dreamed, selling more than 200 million albums and filling stadiums worldwide. *Back In Black*, AC/DC's 1980 comeback, with Johnson in place of Scott, had become the second-biggest-selling album of all time, behind Michael Jackson's *Thriller*. There were no more mountains to climb. It would have been understandable if Angus, now in his sixties, had decided to call it quits, not least because Malcolm was no longer around.

But that's not how Angus saw it. Back in 1980, when AC/DC were making *Back In Black*, he said he felt that Bon's spirit was with them. During the making of *Power Up* there was a similar sense for Angus – of his brother still watching over the band. Every song on this album is based on ideas that the two brothers had worked on right up to the time when Malcolm could no longer do so. Long ago, Angus described *Back In Black* as "our tribute to Bon". Now he says of the new AC/DC album: "This one's for Mal. I always think he's part of it, you know? He's still with us in spirit. I still feel the presence."

On the day in late September when Angus and Brian talk to *Classic Rock* via conference call, they are on opposite sides of the world, Angus in Australia, Brian in the UK. It's funny how they greet each other, almost as if they're surprised to be having this conversation. "Hello Ang?" "Is that Brian?" "Yeah, it's me, bonny boy!" The voices are unmistakable, Angus's nasal Aussie drawl and gurgling laugh, Brian's unvarnished Geordie accent and rasping tone. There's an easy repartee between them as they bounce off each other, cracking jokes at every opportunity. The mood shifts a little when they address the serious stuff, the difficult questions. There are moments when both struggle to find the right words – Angus when expressing the emotions he went through in the dark days of 2017, Brian when reflecting on his time out of the band. There's also the subject of Brian's ongoing medical treatment for his voice and hearing, something, he explains, he is not at liberty to discuss in detail.

For an hour they talk through the turbulent events of the past few years and recall some from 40 years ago. Throughout the conversation, one name keeps coming up, that of Malcolm Young, the tough little character whose drive and no-bullshit ethos pushed AC/DC to the very top. They talk about what it means to have this line-up of the band – the perfect line-up in the circumstances – back together again. They begin by talking about the new album, its title, as Angus and Brian explain it, a statement of intent, like those of previous landmark AC/DC albums: *High Voltage, Let There Be Rock, If You Want Blood You've Got It, For Those About To Rock We Salute You* and, most evocative of all, *Back In Black*.

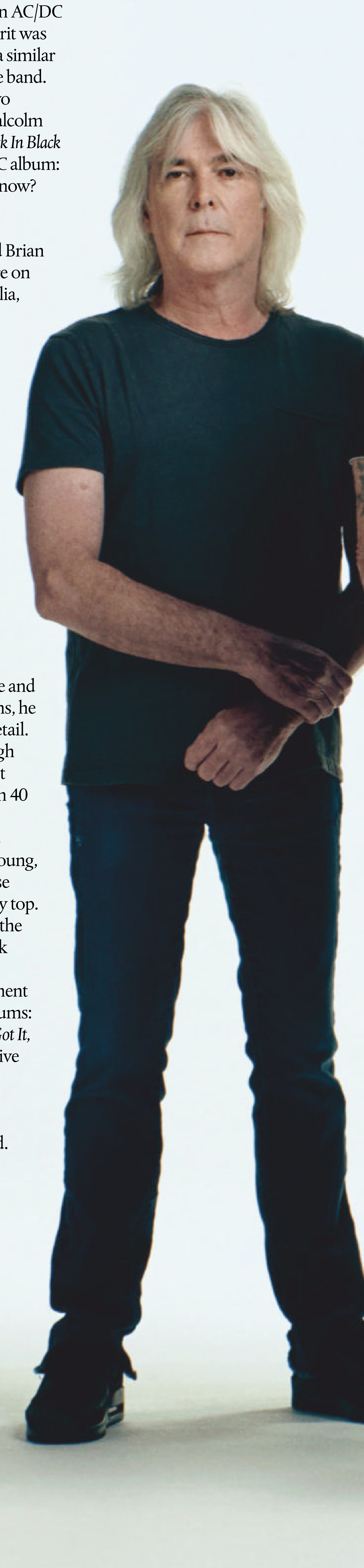
"AC/DC has always been about the power thing," Angus says. "I've always felt when I was plugging in my guitar that I was plugging in to a big electrical grid. So when 'Power Up' came into my head, I thought, yeah, that's it."

"You don't have to think about it," Brian adds. "It's just right."

So, it's here, at last – a new AC/DC album. And it's fair to say that AC/DC fans will be pleasantly unsurprised by what they hear when they listen to it.

Angus: Well, with any album we've ever made, any track we've ever done, the one thing we always aim for is to make it so that as soon as you hear it you know it's AC/DC.

Brian: It's just rock'n'roll, you know? It's a powerful thing. Everybody loves rock'n'roll. And by crikey the world needs it right now, my son! ▷



Powered up for the latest chapter of the AC/DC story: (l to r) Cliff Williams, Phil Rudd, Angus Young, Brian Johnson, Stevie Young.

Stevie Young, Cliff Williams and Angus Young on the video shoot for new single *Shot In The Dark*, and (inset) 1980-vintage AC/DC on the *Back In Black* tour.

Had you finished recording the album before the pandemic began?
Angus: More or less, yeah. But then we had to think about when to put it out. You're ready to go, and then you're plunged in the middle of the whole covid thing. Is that what they call it, covid?
Brian: I guess it is. I call it shite. We were all pumped-up, and then to get stopped in your tracks… Boy, that's frustrating.

But now, with the album coming out, you'll make a lot of people happy.
Angus: Once they hear this, I'm sure. We've provided a kind of cure, I think.
Brian: Oh, it's going to bandage wounds! It's a corker! All these people feeling bad about not being able to go to concerts, so to hear something new is brilliant. I had a dream the other night about going to a concert and watching a guitarist come on stage and – bang! – hit the guitar as hard as he could. And I just went: "Woargh!" And how many other people would just love to see that day? But hey, it is what it is.

Every AC/DC album begins with a real banger, and *Power Up* does exactly that with *Realize*.
Angus: Yeah. I remember the first time Malcolm played me his idea of it, and I said at the time: "You got some lyric ideas?", and he sung what he had to me. I wished I'd had a tape recording of that. But anyhow, it was so hooky it just stuck in my head, so it was easy to put it together.

And all the other songs on the album are ones you wrote with Malcolm?
Angus: All these ideas that are on there are from Mal and me, yeah. Through the years we had a lot of stuff, the two of us, ideas that we worked on together. Some songs nearly completed and other ones that needed a bit more finishing here and there. But it was all marked out, the stuff that we wanted to get recorded. That's what we'd done all the way through. We put ticks next to the material that we felt would be good AC/DC stuff. So that's how this album came together. They were all good ideas, and I thought, well, I hope Mal approves of the way I've put the stuff together.

> **"Some of the songs are very cheeky. The humour of the band, you can never take that away."**
> **Brian Johnson**

Was there anything that Malcolm recorded that made it on to the album?
Angus: Him actually playing, no. Not that. I think that would be a bit spooky, actually.

Who wrote the lyrics?
Angus: A lot of the titles and also some of the lyric ideas were from Mal, the rest from myself.
Brian: A lot of these songs are wonderfully mischievous. And singing these cheeky lyrics, I've never had so much fun. I had a smile on my face

ALAMY

when I was putting them down. I love that, and I think the fans will love it. The music is powerful, but some of the songs are very cheeky. The humour of the band, you can never take that away.

There is something missing on this album, though. There is a long tradition of AC/DC songs with 'rock' or 'rock'n'roll' in the title: *Rock 'N' Roll Singer, Let There Be Rock, Rock And Roll Ain't Noise Pollution, For Those About To Rock*. There were four such songs on *Rock Or Bust*. But none on *Power Up*.

Angus [laughing]: Well, it's just what comes out, you know? Sometimes you have a track and you write down a title and you've used that word 'rock', and you can't get anything else that will fit it better. But don't worry, I've got bags full of ideas for songs, and all of them have got the word 'rock' in them.

Brian: And you've got to remember, 'rock' is a very hard word to rhyme – without getting into trouble.

Did you record tracks live, with the whole band going at it together?

Angus: Basically. We've always pretty much gone in and done the backing tracks with the full band.

Brian: And these boys… Phew, talk about tight!

There's such a positive energy in the album. Is that how it felt when you were making it?

Brian: Yes, absolutely.

Angus: That's what the whole project was. It felt good to be in there, working, and us all being back together and playing away.

In that last comment there's a tacit admission from Angus: that by having the old gang back together the new AC/DC album is legitimate, the genuine article. Without Cliff, Phil and especially Brian, it would not have the same measure of authenticity. Nor would it have the same depth of feel – the rock-solid grooves laid down by Cliff and Phil, the smoky character in Brian's voice. For all Chris Slade's qualities, Phil Rudd always was and always will be the definitive AC/DC drummer. Likewise Cliff Williams as their bassist. And while Axl Rose proved to be an inspired 'super-sub' on the *Rock Or Bust* tour – nailing every high note, and coolly standing aside as Angus ran the show – there is no doubt that Brian is the only man who should be singing for AC/DC.

From beginning to end, the *Rock Or Bust* tour was surely the most bizarre episode in the history of AC/DC – or AXL/DC, as it was jokingly rechristened when Rose got on board. It was also a period in which Brian hit rock bottom.

Let's start with the moment in 2015, during the *Rock Or Bust* tour, when Brian realised he had a problem.

Brian: At the time it was horrible. I really felt I was letting the band down on stage. Because I couldn't hear the tone of the guitars, I couldn't get my pitch or key. You felt helpless. And of course, the band's being let down, the fans are being let down… It's just not fair. I never wanted to be dead weight.

Angus: Brian got a lot of advice from the medical side, and they were pretty much saying if you continue you're going to go stone deaf, so that's also part of it. We didn't want that.

Brian: That's what Angus and Cliff said: "We do not want to be responsible for anything that happens to you. We would feel awful forever."

Brian, when you came off that tour did you think, deep down, that your time with the band was over?

Brian: Initially, yeah. And of course it's a difficult time for anybody who has to stop doing what they love. That's not easy. But you do it. You've got to man up and just shut your mouth and don't talk to anybody, which I didn't, and just ride it out. In my case, I buried my head in a bottle of whisky for the first month. It was quite numbing [laughs]. And I'm not on social media, so I don't read anything, I don't watch anything. I've never been on it and I've stuck off it. And I've found that I'm a quite sensible, rounded man who can take things on the chin.

Angus, what made you decide to carry on with the *Rock Or Bust* tour without Brian? Was it an old-fashioned sense of 'the show must go on'?

Angus: It was an unknown situation, and there was a lot there to think about. You're on tour, you've got a whole big machine with you, and you don't know how Brian's situation is going to play out. Well, maybe if we got somebody, another singer, we might be able to finish off those dates. I thought there probably wouldn't be a chance to regroup for a long time, so it was best maybe that we get it done and get through it. But when something like that happens, I don't think there is any great solution where everyone comes off happy, I guess.

Brian: You did the right thing.

There was widespread disbelief when Axl was announced as Brian's replacement, not least because Axl had only recently reunited with Slash and Duff McKagan for a Guns N' Roses tour.

Angus: Well, Axl contacted our people and said he could help us out. He had his own commitments, but he said if it doesn't interfere with what he was doing he'd fill in. And we thought, well, give it a shot and see what happens.

> **"Everybody loves rock'n'roll, and by crikey the world needs it right now, my son!"**
>
> **Brian Johnson**

The general consensus seems to be that Axl did a great job.

Angus: Yeah. As I said, he was very generous to say: "Hey, I'll help out." And me personally, I've got to give him credit, and the band will be forever grateful that he did that. And remember, he broke his toe, so he was very lucky, I guess, to have Dave Grohl lend him a chair so he could sit on stage. He gave it his best shot, you know?

It also seemed that Axl learned an important lesson from AC/DC. When he went back to Guns N' Roses, he went on stage on time.

Angus [laughing]: You'd be surprised! He's a very pro guy. Every night he was there earlier than us. ▷

Axl Rose, standing in for Brian Johnson, and Angus on the *Rock Or Bust* tour.

Brian, what did it take to get you singing again, without further damage to your hearing? And why are there limits to what you can say about your treatment?
Brian: It's non-disclosure stuff, because it's brand new. What I can tell you is I worked for three years with his lovely old fella and thankfully it worked. I think [laughs]. It took a while. But it was just magical. It could have been smoke and mirrors, but it wasn't, it was the real deal. So we'll go forward with him. I'm still working with him. And I've got my fingers crossed.

Well the new album proves that you can still sing like you've had a truck dropped on your foot.
Brian: Correct!
Angus: He could always hit the high notes.

Cliff's retirement didn't last very long, did it?
Angus: Ha, I guess not. I don't know what he wants to do in the future. I think the touring thing is more difficult for him. But he was really happy doing the album.

Presumably, without getting into too much personal detail, Phil Rudd has put his recent troubles behind him?
Angus: Yeah. He had a rough time that he's gone through. But he had help – professional help – and he's really got himself together. Malcolm always wanted Phil on board. And when I thought about it, Phil was the drummer in AC/DC that I've always felt comfortable with through the years.

And now there's Stevie. As you once said, Angus: "Stevie's like Malcolm, a real rhythm player. Like Keith Richards." Is it all about feel?
Angus: Yeah. Always. I'll do a rough idea of how I think Mal would do his part, and then we'll work it out, Stevie and me, to get the right feel for the track.

This is the AC/DC line-up that the fans wanted.
Brian: It's the right dynamic. It proves the band has a special bond. It's exciting. And when it gets together, somehow it brings this lovely music.

"Malcolm was always practical and a very strong character. He always used to say: 'You plough on.'"

Angus Young

Back in 1980, an evocative line was written about AC/DC when they headed out on the *Back In Black* tour: "The ghost of Bon Scott rides with AC/DC." Forty years on, during the making of *Power Up* there was, as Angus says, the feeling that Malcolm Young's spirit was with them. But it's Brian who reveals an unexpected twist, in a song from the new album – lyrics in which Angus writes about Malcolm, albeit in oblique terms.

In all the years they were together, the two brothers were never much inclined to sentiment. The plain black cover of the *Back In Black* album was a memorial to Bon. But mostly, when speaking of him, Malcolm and Angus would rarely touch on the emotional impact of Bon's death, reverting instead to anecdotal stuff, tales of the singer's wild life, the boozing and the women.

In contrast, a photo on the *Rock Or Bust* album carried great poignancy. Although Malcolm was still alive when the album was released, it was public knowledge that his work with the band was done. The photo of his and Angus's signature guitars side by side, Malcolm's Gretsch and Angus's Gibson SG, had a powerful emotional quality. And in the new song *Through The Mists Of Time* there is, as Brian suggests, a sense of loss in the words written by Angus. "That song is just a beautiful story," Brian says. "Every time I listen to it, I get goosebumps, thinking of Malcolm. I'm just telling you the truth."

Asked whether that song is a eulogy for his brother, Angus backs off a little, a trace of unease in his voice. "It's just a ride through time, in a kind of way," he says. "A bit of a journey." He won't be drawn on any further detail. Instead he says that the lyrics to a rock song should be left open to interpretation. At which point, for a suitable comparison, he makes the surprising mental leap from low to high art: "It's like the Mona Lisa. People still argue today – is it a smile?" Inevitably, this comment is the cue for a couple of jokes.

"I don't know where we sit in culture," Angus says. "We are a kind of culture. Not bacteria…"

"The only culture I've got is a tub of yoghurt in the fridge." Brian adds, without missing a beat.

When the conversation returns again ▷

MAIN: ASHLEY MAILE/ICONICPIX; ANGUS & AXL: ALAMY

"You thought AC/DC was over, didn't you?" Angus has a point to make.

to Malcolm, there's more laughter from them, more funny stories to tell, mixed with moments of quieter reflection, memories of a man who gave everything he had to AC/DC.

Is it true, Angus, that Malcolm told you to keep the band going as long as you can? Didn't he say that to you near the end?
Angus: Yeah, he always pushed. That was how he was. He was always practical and a very strong character. He always used to say: "You plough on." Even in times when we were young. When we were playing those early shows, some of the audiences in those places were really rough and rowdy. I'd go: "Am I going on there with my school shit on?" [laughs]. And he was always the one saying: "Hey, I'm right behind you, I'm right here."

Didn't he say that to you one time just before he gave you a kick in the arse to get on stage?
Angus: Yeah! He pulled a trick on me. He said: "You'll be fine, we'll just peek behind this curtain to see if you'll be okay." And as I was peeking behind the curtain I got a boot and I was on!

There was so much power in the way you played together. What was the secret to that?

> **"It's just rock'n'roll. Everybody loves rock'n'roll. And by crikey the world needs it right now."**
> **Brian Johnson**

Angus: It was just that two of us were always a unit together. It was Malcolm's idea in the beginning to put together the AC/DC band, and when I was younger I was kind of shocked that he even asked me to join. We used to do our own little thing, you know? So from that point on it was the two of us together and we worked as that one unit and tried to do our best and make it one big guitar.

Can you describe this sense that Malcolm's presence is still with you?
Angus: I guess it comes from when I'm playing. After all those years of how it had to be and how I had to play, working with Mal all that time, I've got this in-built thing. Some of that also comes from my other brother, George, who also passed away not long ago. He was also a big part of my life. As you know, he did a lot of the early albums with Bon and Mal and myself and Phil, and he always had this attitude about guitar playing. I remember the first time I was in a studio, and George said to me: "Don't tickle it, play it".

That sounds like something that Malcolm would say.
Brian: You know, I was always amazed when we'd have all these guitarists coming backstage, fellow

pros and all that, and they'd always say to Malcolm: "How do you get that sound?" They were always fascinated by it, this heavy sound. They kept asking and asking, and Mal used to say to them: "There ain't no secret. Just hit 'em harder, mate!"

How tough is it, emotionally, to carry on without Malcolm?
Angus: Well, even when we did the last tour, *Rock Or Bust*, I'd go up the front of the stage, and it's one of those things – every now and again you do a bit of a flip because I think I feel him there, you know?
Brian: That's a lovely sentiment, Ang. And for me, knowing this fella for, like, thirty-six years, what I remember is standing right there with him on stage, and how we used to wink at each other at certain times, or smile, you know?

Is that how you remember him best – on stage, blasting out those riffs, driving the band on?
Brian: Aye. There's one thing I always remember about Mal. We'd get to the end of a song and his arms would be pumping, and I used to watch his guitar pick bend like a band-saw going through a plank of wood.
Angus: I saw that in *For Those About To Rock*. You'd see it going, his pick…
Brian: You could see this plastic powder coming off that fucking thing. I used to catch it in the spotlight. Otherwise you wouldn't be able to see it. And I used to look and think: "How does he do that?"

Do all of the band feel, as Angus does, that Malcolm's spirit lives on in AC/DC?
Brian: Yeah. It's like Ang says, every now and again I turn and he's not there. But this feeling we have, it's just one of those strange things in life. It's wonderful. You just have this feeling that he's keeping an eye on people.
Angus: He certainly is.

Even before the release of *Power Up*, 2020 was already a landmark year for AC/DC, marking the fortieth anniversaries of both the death of Bon Scott and the release of *Back In Black*. "I always remember Bon," Angus says. "I don't have to have a special day for it. I always think of him."

For Brian, there are mixed emotions when talking about Bon, with whom he toured in the early 70s, when Bon was fronting the group Fraternity, prior to joining AC/DC, and Brian was the singer with British band Geordie. There is a trace of sadness in Brian's voice as he pays tribute to Bon. "He was larger than life. Just this great singer, wordsmith, frontman – you name it, he had it." But when he thinks back to the making of *Back In Black* – begun just two months after Bon's death – what he remembers above all else is the sheer excitement of what was for him a life-changing experience. "It was the happiest six weeks I ever had," he says. "It was something new happening for me. It was just a joy. And when the album was done… well, bloody hell, it was great. And that was that. That was the end of civilian life as we know it."

> **"I thought I would never, ever go in and do another album. But I did, and to come back it was fantastic."**
> **Brian Johnson**

Looking to the future, both Brian and Angus are itching to get back on stage. Beyond that there's nothing written in stone. Only one thing is certain: that Angus will continue to stick by those three little words that Malcolm repeated to him year after year, like a mantra: "You plough on."

The dream that Brian mentioned he had recently, about watching a rock'n'roll show, it's pretty obvious what that says about your frame of mind right now.
Brian: Oh yeah. I can't wait to get out there every night and bust some chops.
Angus: Yeah! The quicker the world gets back to normal…

Do you have to get in shape ahead of a tour, or are you always fighting fit?
Angus: I do a little bit before. I get myself psyched up. I don't like to overdo it, though. I might spend a couple of weeks getting the rust out of me. But it doesn't really matter how much exercise I've done before, always after the first night I go: "Jeez…" [laughs]. The next day I'll be stiff and sore, but from then on I'm into battle shape.

It's difficult to imagine you going jogging.
Angus: I'm not a jogger, no. I just do a little bit of skipping with a rope. I used to watch Muhammad Ali do that, and I thought if it's good enough for him it's good enough for me!

One of the best AC/DC shows ever filmed must be the one in Buenos Aires in 2009, featured on the DVD *Live At River Plate*.
Brian: Oh, whenever I see that, the part where me and Angus are out there in the middle, two little fellas at the end of this walkway, and these thousands of people jumping up in unison… I mean, holy shit, just look at them. No wonder we're smiling there. Well, I don't know if it was a smile, or just fear!

When you play to an audience like that do you forget about any aches and pains you might have in your bones?
Angus: Oh yeah. You don't feel it when you're doing it. It's usually afterwards.

So you're planning a tour, but then what? Angus, you've said you have more songs in the bag, but realistically is *Power Up* likely to be the last AC/DC studio album?
Angus: I've no crystal ball. Whatever you do, you do it, it's done, and what comes in the future you hope is good. But you never know how life is. We've no road map for life. I wish we did, but we don't.

While recording the new album were there times when you thought you had to make the most of it?
Brian: I think you should, always. I think for everybody, that's a great lesson in life. Like Ang said, you've no crystal ball, so whatever you're doing you should grab it with both hands. For me, I thought I would never, ever go in and do another album. But I did, and to come back it was fantastic. I got the opportunity and I'm very grateful for it, it's as simple as that. And I enjoyed it ten times more than normal because I didn't ever think I would do it again. When you listen to this album you can tell that I loved doing it. And I hope it's not the last, that's all I can say.

Will there be an AC/DC as long as Angus is still standing?
Angus: Well, as I say, I've got no crystal ball. But as Malcolm used to say: "You're like the Titanic – when the ship goes down, the band goes down with it."

But for now it's good to have AC/DC back.
Angus: Yeah, it's a good thing. The world gets another good old hard shock of AC/DC.
Brian: That's what we all need.

Power Up is released on November 13 via Columbia Records.

From KENTUCKY With LOVE

They've rejuvenated southern rock, enjoyed huge successes and crippling disappointment, weathered internal storms and survived. This is the story of **Black Stone Cherry**. So far.

Words: **Hannah May Kilroy**

Edmonton is a small town deep in the US state of Kentucky, with a population of around 2,000. It was near here, out in a cabin in the woods, its walls plastered with posters of music legends, that the seeds of Black Stone Cherry were sown almost 20 years ago. Here, the four fiercely determined kids spent all their time playing music, honing a refreshing sound that elevated their southern rock roots to anthemic hard-rock heights.

In 2005, when they were barely out of their teens, they signed a record deal with Roadrunner and it all kicked off: they released hit after hit, and flew around the world to play with their heroes, becoming famed for their fire-cracker live shows.

Now in their 30s, they've achieved more than most bands would have done in a lifetime, while remaining delightfully grounded – still living in their home towns. "We're no different from anyone else," drummer John Fred Young drawls. "We just happen to get up on a stage and play rock'n'roll."

With the band having just released *The Human Condition*, their seventh album, *Classic Rock* caught up with all four members – the same line-up since day one – to discover their story, told in their own words.

"In a horse race, we're the mule, man – we're slow and steady and we'll get there our own way."

John Fred Young (drums): I've known Chris since I was five. We went to school together. Our dads both played guitar, and we became close friends. When we got into middle school I got interested in drumming, and Chris and I were in a school band together.

Chris Robertson (vocals, guitar): I saw John Fred do a drum solo in the school talent show, and I said, man, we gotta start a band. Then I got an electric guitar for my thirteenth birthday.

Jon Lawhon (bass): I moved up from Florida in 1998. I joined Drumline [percussion school band], and through that I met John Fred and Chris. I was a year above them – I'm the grandpa. We didn't like each other at first. They were always screwing around, and didn't like how all business I was. But the music brought us together.

Chris: Jon played guitar, but we needed a bass player. My dad had a bass at home, so Jon came over and tried it out, and it all went from there.

John Fred: My dad and uncle were in a band called Itchy Hunter in the sixties, later becoming the Kentucky Headhunters. They had this old practice house out on a farm near my grandparents, so we used that. It's a craftsman-style home, with posters and vinyl records nailed to the walls cos there was no insulation ▷

MIKE RODWAY/PRESS

Hair-raising stuff: Ben Wells with BSC at the 2011 Download Festival.

Receiving their award for Best New Band at the Classic Rock Roll Of Honour Awards ceremony in London in 2007.

John Fred Young with BSC at Hard Rock Calling, Hyde Park, London, July 2012.

"I'd never been on a plane until we'd had to fly to a gig. I'd never seen the ocean. And that was okay to me."

Chris Robertson

– everything from Aretha Franklin, Bob Seger, the Stones, old bluegrass stuff. It was like growing up in a rock'n'roll museum. And we could play as loud as we wanted.

Ben Wells (guitar): I lived in Glasgow, which is about fifteen minutes from Edmonton. A mutual friend of ours took me to the practice house. It was a Cinderella story: they were looking for a guitar player, and I was looking for guys who wanted to take music seriously.

Chris: After we jammed with Ben, we asked him to come back the next day, which was June 4, 2001. He got to practice earlier than everyone else. He probably thought we'd stood him up.

John Fred: The rest is history. We started the band right then. It was Chris's sixteenth birthday.

Ben: We were ready to go, anxious to get started now that we'd found each other. All we wanted to do was play music. And that's what we did. Every single day.

John Fred: Once my dad realised we were serious, he started working with us, teaching us about the music business, and how to write songs. He was a huge help. We had a lot of support from our families.

Chris: We were like nineteen or twenty when we signed the deal with Roadrunner. It was such a feeling of accomplishment.

Ben: Our families were so proud. We signed the contract in that practice house.

Roadworks ahead: Robertson, Wells and Lawhon on tour, October 2007.

John Fred: We took some of our record advance money and bought this SUV instead of a van. We thought it would be more comfortable cos it had seats.

Jon: I think we did 47,000 miles on that SUV in just four months!

Ben: But we thought it was the greatest thing ever, cos we were on tour. We were finally doing it.

John Fred: After the first album, we opened for this band Hinder, and they invited us to Europe with them. We landed in Sweden and it was a total culture shock. Seeing the architecture, hearing Swedish… I went into a sandwich shop, and the guy said that's gonna be a hundred and forty krone. I said to the dudes: "We're gonna starve out here, man! This is a hundred and forty dollars?" And Chris goes: "No, man, you gotta convert it. It's like fifteen bucks!" [laughs]. That's how naive I was.

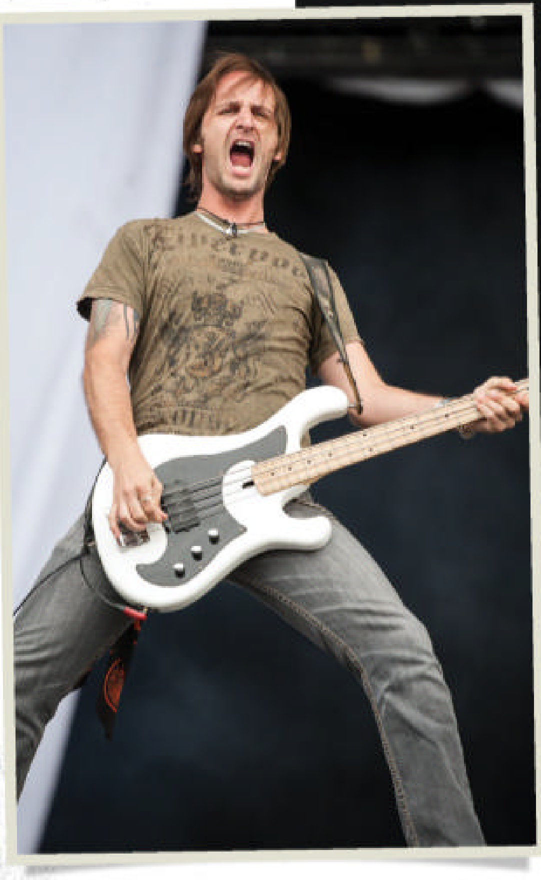
Chris: Going from Edmonton, Kentucky to Stockholm, Sweden was the craziest thing I had

MAIN: KEVIN NIXON; GETTY x2; INSET: ANDY SHORT

BSC with Whitesnake's Doug Aldrich and Def Leppard's Joe Elliott backstage at Birmingham NEC June 18, 2008.

Mouthing off: Chris Robertson (right) and Jon Lawhon (below) doing what BSC do best – playing live.

ever done in my life. I'd never been on a plane until we'd had to fly to a gig. I'd never seen the ocean. And that was okay to me. But I'm so grateful that the band allowed me to explore.



From then on, Black Stone Cherry's star kept rising. In 2007 they played London's Hyde Park Calling, on a bill that included Aerosmith and Joe Satriani. That same year they won Best New Band at the Classic Rock Awards,where they found themselves hobnobbing with the stars that adorned the walls of their practice house. They released their second album, *Folklore And Superstition*, in 2008, and went on a UK arena tour supporting Def Leppard and Whitesnake. The following year they opened for radio-rock giants Nickelback, again in the UK, where they were gaining a fan base.

Chris: We read a review of Hyde Park Calling where we had gotten like an eight-point-five out of ten and Aerosmith got a seven. We were like: "Oh my God, we got a higher rating on a live gig than Aerosmith!"

John Fred: We're a word-of-mouth band, I think – seeing is believing. Our live show is our ace card. Hyde Park Calling was kinda the game-changer for us. And the Classic Rock Awards were incredible. We were very starstruck, and nervous.

Ben: This is kinda weird, but I used the urinal beside Steven Tyler at the Classic Rock Awards, and I couldn't say a word. Aerosmith are my favourite band. They were sitting like two tables away from us, and I could not make myself go over. I was so nervous. I've still never met them. One day I'll get the courage.

John Fred: The Def Leppard/Whitesnake tour was really big. Those guys were so incredible to us.

Chris: On that tour we're two songs into our set at Wembley, and I look over and see this familiar-looking gentleman watching us. It was Jimmy Page! The other guys didn't believe me. But then we met him after the show. When he said he loved what we were doing with southern rock, my head about exploded.

John Fred: That was one of those moments where we were really trying not to freak out.

Chris: I think that tour and Nickelback had a huge impact on our success in the UK. They got us in front of so many people. We've never been as successful in the United States as we are in the UK and Europe. Which is crazy, because we're the most American band ever!

Ben: The UK has really been our biggest following. People always ask us why is that. I guess people can see we're a genuine band, and I think the UK audience is super-smart to that. We were ourselves, and I think that was something that people latched on to.

But amid all the starry excitement, tension was brewing within the band. Life on the road was taking its toll, and as their star rose, so did the pressure to deliver ▷

> **"When Jimmy Page said he loved what we were doing with southern rock, my head about exploded."**
> Chris Robertson

MAIN: GETTY; TOP: JOBY SESSIONS; INSET: KEVIN NIXONQ2

The Cherry in their rural hideaway in 2014: (l-r) Jon Lawhon, Ben Wells, John Fred Young, Chris Robertson.

radio-ready hits. In 2011 Black Stone Cherry released their third album, *Between The Devil And The Deep Blue Sea*, arguably their most commercial-sounding record to date.

But behind the scenes, things were falling apart for their frontman Chris Robertson.

John Fred: For the third record, the label wanted us to do co-writes with other people. We had never really done that. We'd written with Bob [Marlette, who produced *Folklore And Superstition*], and my dad, but otherwise it was just us four writing the songs. So we did it, we were open-minded, and wrote some great songs and made some new friends. But it was awkward, cos it was not how we had formulated things.

Chris: We had to write and write for that album cycle, and we were trying to please too many people. It was feeling almost impossible.

John Fred: It was stifling at times, because the label wanted us to make a radio-ready record. I think a lot of great things came out of it. It was an inside view of how big-time pop rock records are made. We always try to take away the positives. And working with Howard [Benson, producer] was great.

Ben: Our biggest fear was that we did not want to be cookie-cutter. Sometimes you're told: "Chris, can you not sing so southern", or "Can you take out those guitar solos", or "John Fred, don't play so many drum fills", and don't do this or that because it won't get on the radio. And it's like, well, that's not us, though!

John Fred: We always had to fight for our integrity, and to stand up for our sound. I don't think *Between The Devil* stripped away what we were, but it did obviously polish us. In a horse race, we're the mule, man – we're slow and steady and we'll get there our own way.

"I'm manic depressive, and I'm open about it. I think it's horseshit that people have to feel weird talking about mental health."

Chris Robertson

Chris: Around then I went through a nervous breakdown. I didn't wanna play music or be on stage. I wanted to be done with the music business. That coupled with my own demons and not being around my family all got me into a bad spot. I decided to see a doctor.

Jon: My mom went through depression, so I understood a little what Chris was going through. I tried my best to be supportive. He went through addiction to medications through that too, and we as a band fought with him. There was one night in Germany where John Fred and Chris had a big blow-up. I had to jump in between them.

Ben: When you get to a dark point or argument, especially when you're thousands of miles from home, a lot of bands would throw in the towel. But we're brothers.

Chris: I realised that Black Stone Cherry is who I am. At the end of 2012, we got together to decide if we were still going to be in a band. It had gotten that bad. Through my own practices and medication I'm much better now. I'm manic depressive, and I'm open about it. I think it's horseshit that people have to feel weird talking about mental health.

John Fred: I gotta be honest, I never thought we would break up. I knew we would kick this thing's ass and come back strong as hell. We're a family first and a band second.

Jon: That's the reason we're still here today. If it wasn't for that, Chris could have ended up committing suicide. You just don't know. We're never willing to give up on each other.

Revitalised and raring to go again, Black Stone Cherry came back even stronger. In 2014 they released their fourth album, *Magic Mountain*, which focused less on radio, more on music. "We found out we were ▷

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Sitting comfortably: BSC in 2020.

bringing in fans from the jam-band world, who liked Phish, the Allman Brothers, Gov't Mule. That was cool to us," Jon says of that release. The following year they went on their first headlining arena tour, in their beloved UK, on which the Birmingham show was shot for a live DVD, *Thank You – Livin' Live*.

Soon after that high came a low, when the band were let go by Roadrunner Records.

Jon: The very first time we headlined an arena, we were all so choked up and crying we could hardly speak! I think we're the only band to have an extremely successful arena tour, come home, and a couple months later be dropped by our label [laughs]. But it meant we were free agents.

"I think we're the only band to have an extremely successful arena tour, come home, and a couple months later be dropped by our label [laughs]."

Jon Lawhon

John Fred: For about six months we didn't have a record deal. We thought, whoever we sign with, they are gonna have to understand that we wanna produce our own records, we don't wanna have the A&R fingers in the pie, we just wanna do our own thing.

Jon: We were kind of courted by several labels. We met with Ed [van Zijl], the owner of Mascot, and the majority of the conversation was about amplifiers, guitars, classic rock acts, blues bands… He's a music guy.

John Fred: That was refreshing. Mascot support us, and just let us be ourselves. We also liked that Mascot had bands that were real musicians. Underground artists that are blues, rock, left-field.

Ben: We put out two blues cover EPs with Mascot, of our favourite blues songs. We got to introduce a younger generation to those artists.

Chris: We released our first album with them, *Kentucky*, in 2016. And nothing against producers or anything, but all the final music proceedings are now down to us, which I love.

Jon: Now we're on our third album with them [*The Human Condition*], and I feel like we've really hit our stride not only as a band, but also as producers. We did it in my studio [Monocle Studios].

John Fred: I think we kept the integrity of what Black Stone Cherry is: the raw rock, the badass playing, the songwriting. The new album has about eight or nine older songs that we didn't get to use until now, for whatever reasons, but that were always dear to our hearts.

Jon: We wrote *Ringin' In My Head* ages ago, but when you listen to the lyrics – *'People, people your attention please/I need to tell y'all about a new disease…'* – it's like it was written by psychics!

Ben: We recorded the album right around the beginning of the pandemic, and I think that emotional side comes out. We were confused and angry, watching our tour dates go away. We played with pure intensity, because we didn't know when or if we would play again.

Chris: This year has been tough. As much as we love making records, we want the human interaction of playing music for people. Right before the pandemic we played with Lynyrd Skynyrd, and Jonny Van Zant brought me and my dad up on stage with them to hold up the American flag during *Free Bird*. It's one of my fondest memories.

John Fred: I think there's so much greatness still left in our story. It's so inspiring when you go on tour with someone like Alice Cooper, like we did last year. That guy's in his seventies and he is just the most positive guy. We wanna keep touring, making music and contributing to the world. We wanna do this until we die.

The Human Condition is available now via Mascot Label Group.

MIKE RODWAY/PRESS

DIARY OF A TEENAGE METALHEAD

Before Rage Against The Machine were rock veterans, before Prophets Of Rage even existed, there was a young Kiss fan building his star from the ground up. Now, as he prepares to publish a career-spanning new book, *Whatever It Takes*, **Tom Morello** takes us back to his early years.

Words: **Tom Morello** Portrait: **Joby Sessions**

MADIBA
I PLAY THE GUITAR.

My first ever gig – a euphoric moment.
My first concert was seeing my favorite band in the world at the time, Kiss. The show was at the Chicago Stadium in a suspect part of Chicago. My mom, who was a high-school teacher, bought a ticket for a student of hers to drive my friend and I to the show. This was a time where the great bands really maintained a mystique. There were only these fabulous rumours about the band spitting blood and breathing fire and guitars smoking, so my anticipation was at a fever pitch to see all this in person. The opening band was Uriah Heap, and the experience felt so much louder than ten jet plane engines surrounding my head. Our seats were behind a pole at the side of the stage but that did not diminish the rock euphoria I felt that night. As you can see here, I am glowing in my rain boots and bootleg T-shirt.

My teenage bedroom in Libertyville.
Here I am playing my Gibson Explorer 2 practising some hot licks in front of my wall-sized Kiss poster, my extensive collection of stuff and ceramic hippopotamuses. My lifeline to the world is the record player you can see in the background there. I would sit for hours in my room practising Michael Schenker riffs, Randy Rhoads leads, and dreaming of one day being able to make albums and play on stage.

This is a period where I was practising countless hours a day, every day, without fail.

"I was pursuing an Honours Degree in Political Science, and an Honours Degree in Spandex-Wearing Jheri-Curl Hair-Metal."

The first time I performed live.
Here I am [left] posing before my first ever public performance, which would be in my mom's basement in Libertyville, IL. My band, the Electric Sheep, was dressed for the occasion. I'm wearing a garbage bag held together with electrical tape, the prerequisite headband, jeans that have exactly a hundred safety pins running down the legs, and moccasins. A photo of Stonehenge looms in the background. While I was nervous as hell, at the same time I was ready to begin the lifetime adventure of live performance.

The show was a gathering of the high school's Concert Choir, where we inflicted our cacophonous original punk rock tunes on our unsuspecting classmates. The concert began with us hiding our punk outfits by all wearing concert robes until the big reveal. I remember at one moment during the show, balancing my guitar on my head and pulling on it, bowing the neck until it almost snapped off, to get some horrific feedback result.

© TOM MORELLO x3

High-school jams, Alice Cooper make-up and, erm… Renaissance Faire work.

Adam Jones and I played in my high-school band together. We were called the Electric Sheep. Adam was a talented musician and I was a beginner, so he helped me find my way around the fretboard. I dressed as Alice Cooper pretty much every Halloween for a number of years. I identified with Alice embracing his outsider-ness, as I felt like an outsider. The twisted glam rock mixed with horror themes and awesome riffs were an intoxicating blend for my teenage self.

I worked five summers at the Renaissance Faire in Bristol, Wisconsin, strumming pirate shanties and frolicking about in tights. It was a way to pay off college loans while pretending I was living in the *Lord Of The Rings*.

© TOM MORELLO x4

Hair-metal at Harvard.

I was the first person from my home town to ever attend Harvard University. I was also the first person to ever apply to Harvard University. I basically had a dual major that I was pursuing: an Honours degree in Political Science, and an Honours Degree in Spandex-Wearing Jheri-Curl Hair-Metal.

New bands in Hollywood.

I arrived in Hollywood in 1986 [joining pop rockers Them Generation, above] with a college degree and a Marshall stack. I was utterly unemployable, as my Renaissance Faire-based work history left me with few marketable skills other than juggling and playing *Yo, Ho, Ho And A Bottle Of Rum*.

Lock Up's first record deal – and a questionable album title.

I endeavored to put together a political band with heavy riffs and funky rhythms, but no one was having it, so I joined the only band that would have me, a pop-rock outfit called Them Generation. Fortunately that not-so-good-band was rehearsing at the same complex as my favorite local band, Lock Up. Lock Up was in a vein of funk rock – like early Chili Peppers-meets-Living Colour. When Lock Up parted ways with their guitarist, the fellow who ran the rehearsal space recommended they give me a look, as he had heard me shredding up a storm through the walls for months. And so I joined my favorite local band and embarked on the hard-scrabble club-playing experience of a struggling Hollywood musician. We eventually scored a record deal with Geffen, and I began my recording career with an album awkwardly titled *Something Bitchin' This Way Comes*.

Rage Against The Machine begins...

When Lock Up broke up, the first call I made was to Brad Wilk [pictured above], who had auditioned for an earlier version of Lock Up and I remembered him being an outstanding drummer and nice guy. Rage Against The Machine formed in late summer 1991, and our first real public performance was at a lunchtime event at Cal State Northridge, where we slowly but surely won over the skeptical students.

My friends in Tool.

We had a long-standing friendship with the guys in Tool. In addition to Adam [Jones] and I [left, as youngsters] coming from the same small town, Maynard [Keenan] was my roommate for a short time in Hollywood. Tool was a great band from their first gig and everybody knew it. They had us open for them at early club shows. When they signed their record deal, they had a celebratory show and we opened up. There were about 25 people in the room for this Rage/Tool throw-down.

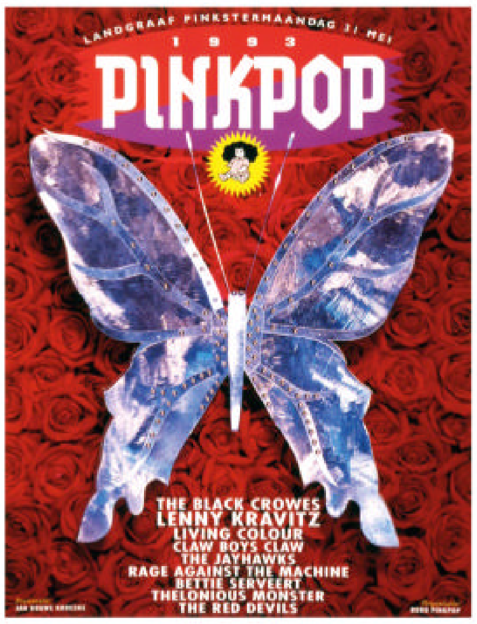
"*Killing In The Name* was played on BBC Radio complete with all sixteen 'fk you's and one 'motherf**ker'."**

On tour with Public Enemy.

Rage Against The Machine's first tour was a West Coast swing with our heroes Public Enemy. We admired the great poet rapper Chuck D and the inspiring music and sonics of the group. It was an honour to share the stage with these all-time greats. The photo on the back of the first RATM record was taken at The Palace in Hollywood. It was our tenth show and we were opening up for Body Count, whose debut album was causing a stir.

BBC radio makes *Killing In The Name* a hit in the UK.

Early on in the UK, RATM had a Sex Pistols moment where an unedited version of *Killing In The Name* was played on BBC radio complete with all sixteen 'fuck you's and one 'motherfucker'. Soon thereafter we began gracing the cover of *NME* and *Melody Maker* weekly and, much to our surprise, became pop stars in the UK, with teenybopper fans sleeping in the lobbies of our hotels trying to catch a glimpse. Meanwhile, back home I was still living hand-to-mouth in a cramped apartment with many roommates.



Heading to Pinkpop festival in the Netherlands, as the shows keep getting bigger.

The first festival show I ever played was Pinkpop in Holland in 1993 [with Rage Against The Machine among a line-up topped by the Black Crowes, Lenny Kravitz and Living Colour]. I had never seen an audience that big. We were late arriving at the gig so didn't even have time to be nervous. Looking out at a sea of 60,000 fans and seeing the music connect really made me think that we were on to something.

That protest at Lollapalooza.

The Parents Music Resource Center was a pro-censorship music organisation in the United States founded by Senators' wives with the aim of censoring heavy metal and rap music. That year, Rage was the opening band on the Lollapalooza tour, and in Philadelphia we staged a naked anti-censorship protest in a football stadium. We stood stone-faced with duct tape across our mouths and the letters 'PMRC' emblazoned across our chests. We stood there for fifteen minutes as the guitars howled with feedback. We didn't play a single note of music that day, challenging the stadium audience to recognise that you can't take controversial music for granted, and that bands like RATM could be silenced permanently unless you act. It was also crazy to be standing there for so long. At first there was rapturous applause which, as it became obvious that we weren't going to play, became angry boos and quarters being chucked at our dicks.

Whatever It Takes, the new book by Tom Morello, is available to order from TomMorelloBook.com

PINKPOP: © GERRIT SERNÉ (PHOTOGRAPHY) / COR VAN WEES (DESIGN); RATM x2: © LINDSAY BRICE; TOM & DANNY + RATM & CHUCK D: © TOM MORELLO

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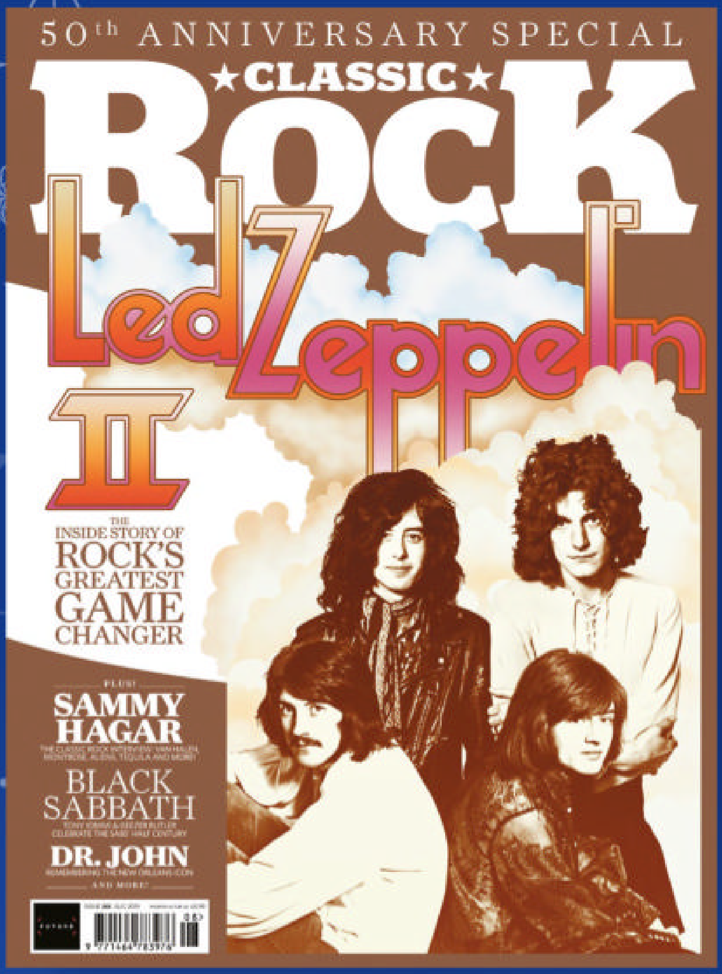

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"I'M BY NO MEANS NORMAL"

As a teenager she was playing with Santana and Steve Vai. Since then **Orianthi** has toured with Alice Cooper, befriended rock's A-list and become one of the industry's most in-demand guitarists. Now she has a new record.

Words: **Polly Glass**

Orianthi doesn't blend in. Even in her home city of LA, a veritable hotbed of glamorous freaks, the Adelaide-born virtuoso stands out; her assemblage of trilbys, luminous feather boas, leathers, babydoll lips and huge sunglasses give her the look of a Sunset Strip cowboy, with a pleasingly weird edge. The mononymous name helps. She's no girl-next-door, and nor does she want to be.

It all compounds the already commanding effect of her six-string chops, honed over years of A-list collaborations and solo hits that began in her teens. If Prince and Billy Gibbons had a hippie millennial daughter, it might have been Orianthi.

"I'm by no means normal," she says, laughing dryly, her Aussie drawl still intact even after 15 years in Tinseltown. "Eccentric? Sure, absolutely. And sometimes I just don't care as much, when I'm walking down the street and I'll wear strange things that make other people go: 'Oh my god, what's wrong with you?' I just don't care."

Now 35, Orianthi Panagaris (she was named after her Greek grandmother, and her father played in a Greek band) has come a long way since her first trips to the States for musical equipment industry NAMM shows. Back then she was an 18-year-old trying to get a record deal, all the while saving up and playing in cover bands back in Oz. Since getting signed and moving to LA permanently when she was 20, her reputation as one of rock's go-to guitar stars has grown 10-fold. It hasn't always been a slick ride – at 25 she ended up on the 'Worst Dressed' list at the American Music Awards ("I looked like the Mad Hatter from a circus that took acid") – but her commitment to evolving and entertaining hasn't faltered.

"Look at Prince, look at the Rolling Stones – everyone changes. That's kinda what we're here for as artists, to entertain people. Sometimes I can be ridiculous, but at the end of the day it's about entertainment. I look at people I've worked with and they do shocking things, they do things that are out there because it's not normal and people love that."

With a resumé that ranges from early work with Carlos Santana, Steve Vai and (right before he died) Michael Jackson, through to a long stint as Alice Cooper's lead guitarist and guest spots with, among others, The Hollywood Vampires, it isn't difficult to see what she means.

"It's about having quality music you stand behind, but when it comes to doing a music video, photo shoot or concert, people don't want to see you just standing there, they want to see crazy shit."

Speaking via Skype, she tells us she's spent much of this odd year cooking, running – "I run six miles every day" – and gearing up for the delayed release of her new solo album, *O*. Made in Nashville last year, it's an eclectic, meaty collage of swaggering guitars, synths, pop sensibilities, raw industrial touches and even dark country. Nikki Sixx wrote the lyrics for *Stream Of Consciousness* – in which he paints a dark, macabre picture of LA ("the sunniest place with the shadiest people, right?" she observes drily) – although after 15 years of city and industry experience Orianthi also had plenty to write about herself.

"People are very interesting over here, because it's very goal-based. Sometimes people get caught up too much and lose what… like when I picked up a guitar for the first time, that feeling. That's what it's about, it's about music. The flash that goes with it? Sure, but a lot of people get caught up in the flash more than the substance.

"You're finishing about three or four in the morning... We used to sleep out in barns and get drunk on red wine."

"I really wanted to make a record," she continues. "It felt like the right timing, and it came from my own stories, my friends' stories, different things. It was kinda like therapy."

She's politely cagey when pressed for specifics, but there are a couple of things that these songs definitely *aren't* about. Album closer *Moonwalker*, for example, isn't about Michael Jackson. Raw, heartsick ballad *Crawling Out Of The Dark* isn't about Richie Sambora – Orianthi's "most public" relationship to date, allegedly over after the pair's band RSO called it a day in 2018.

"Richie and I are great," she says. "We support each other and everything's cool there. When people see things in the press about a public relationship… We took a break in our relationship, a while ago, and he's making his solo record, which sounds great. I dated quite a few people before him and after, you know what I mean? So it's just a thing where people like to listen to a song and say, oh this is about this person, or that. And it's not."

This thick skin and slick composure didn't come from nowhere. Having quit school at 15, Orianthi gigged hard in covers bands for five years, drinking heavily and picking up a few bruises and chipped teeth along the way. "Three nights a week. Sometimes you play weddings and people get drunk out in the country. We used to sleep out in barns and get drunk on red wine afterwards. You're finishing about three or four a.m., loading your gear, having interesting encounters with different people, a lot of drunks… But that's part of it."

Getting signed to a major label at 20 brought a heady rush of money, stylists and Business Class flights. "And I didn't know where the money was all going either," she says. "You go: 'What's going on here?' And everyone's telling you: 'Oh everything's fine.' But then at the end of the day you get: 'Here's a bill…' A lot of people don't realise the tour bus, the drives, the tour manager, the band, salaries, gas, production, the techs… It's pretty crazy when you become aware of that. Some people never do."

There's more in the works. She's working on an animated movie with Dave Stewart, which Gary Clark Jr is also involved with. Her next solo record is in the works ("I've been writing with Richie, Robby Krieger and a ton of people"). There's a meditation album too ("which is with sound-healing, it's all instrumental"), and the possibility of acting work is on the cards ("I was offered quite a few things," she offers casually of her previous brush with the industry. "*CSI Miami* wanted me on there ages ago").

She's wary of the excesses that have impacted so many of her friends and predecessors in the industry. Perhaps it's just part and parcel of becoming a savvy 'name' so young, but (save the odd martini, joint or glass of wine) she's clear on her priorities: "I look at my lifestyle, how much I've got to get done and what I wanna do," she says, "it's not worth it. I respect music too much. I respect people that buy music too much, the fans that come to shows. You don't want to be a disaster."

O is available now via Frontiers.

PATRICK RIVERA/PRESS

CULT HEROES

A brilliant line-up, lyrics from a science-fiction author, an homage to *Spinal Tap*… Welcome to the first new **Blue Öyster Cult** album in almost 20 years.

Words: **Dave Ling** Portrait: **Mark Weiss**

When Blue Öyster Cult last saw fit to release a studio album, the newly elected US president George W Bush was busy arranging furniture in the White House, Holland had become the first nation to green-light same-sex marriages, and New York was still several months away from the 9/11 terror attacks. Yes, it was that long ago.

In stark contrast to the halcyon days of the 1970s and early 80s, when the Big Apple-resident band enjoyed a run of best-selling albums and even a global smash hit single, *(Don't Fear) The Reaper*, the new millennium saw them appear to run out of steam. *Classic Rock* awarded that last album, 2001's *Curse Of The Hidden Mirror*, a mere two stars out of five, and when lukewarm sales prompted their record label to quietly drop them, BÖC's days as a recording act seemed numbered.

Since then they have hardly seemed anxious to release new music. As recently as mid-2016, when *Classic Rock* enquired about the possibility, guitarist/frontman Eric Bloom replied: "I've no answer to that question, except that I'm open-minded." When pressed on whether he would *like* to make a record, he shrugged: "Again, there's no answer. Roger Daltrey says he won't record again because he doesn't want the results stolen. I feel the same."

Thankfully, Daltrey had a change of heart, resulting in last year's better-than-expected Who album *Who*. And now, against the odds, Blue Öyster Cult have also released one. Three-and-a-half years down the line, Bloom and his guitarist-singer counterpart Donald 'Buck Dharma' Roeser both attribute their group's revitalisation as a creative force to signing a contract with the Italian label Frontiers Records that began with a slew of reissues and archival live releases.

"Without a label we really hadn't wanted to proceed," Bloom insists. "Getting a record contract and having the financial wherewithal was what it took to get this done."

"We had to overcome a fair bit of inertia to bring the project to fruition," Buck Dharma admits, "but once the cobwebs had gone we became really excited about what we were doing. To a degree we had been happy to rest on our laurels and play our catalogue on stage for quite a few years. It had become apparent that with our last two albums that we weren't selling a lot of records any more, but that didn't bother us because we were doing very well as a live act.

"One thing that *did* change was that we'd had a really good line-up for a number of years, and we knew it was time to make one final record," Dharma continues, before correcting himself. "This may be our last record or it may not, time will tell."

> **"This may be our last record or it may not, time will tell."**
> **Buck Dharma**

Before getting into the nitty-gritty of Bloom and Dharma's separately conducted interviews, both are anxious to hear *Classic Rock*'s opinion of *The Symbol Remains*. Awarded eight out of 10 in this issue, it knocks its predecessor into the proverbial cocked hat. From the chuckle-inducing lyric '*Is the glass half-empty, or is the skull half-full?*' (*Box In My Head*) to unexpected reunions with old bandmates and cryptic references to the past, it's full of the little musical quirks and attention to detail that made their back catalogue so consistently fascinating. Suffice to say there won't be many better classic rock albums released in 2020.

"Eric and I are very content with our legacy, but if we were going to do this then we couldn't simply have phoned it in," Dharma emphasises. "And what I like about the record is that it is so diverse." ▷

Eric Bloom lays down a vocal track during the recording of new album *The Symbol Remains*.

Richie Castellano: "The album's pivot man," according to Eric Bloom.

Jules Radino and Richie Castellano compete in the 'watching a scary movie' look.

In fact, three of the album's 14 songs written by Dharma had previously found their way on to YouTube in demo form, with the guitarist playing all of the instruments. The rest are all contemporary compositions.

Although the band had begun piecing the album together a little over a year ago, during what we now recognise as more ordinary times, they were forced to complete it amid various quarantine-enforced conditions.

"We'd never worked in such a way before, but this is the 2020 version of how records are made," Bloom observes sagely. "The backing tracks were already completed, but Buck and I recorded our parts via video-conferencing at our respective houses, directing them to the computer at Richie Castellano's home."

"What made it worse was that Eric was at his winter home in Florida and I was here at my own place in Maryland," Dharma says. "But somehow, out there on Staten Island, Richie pulled it all together."

Having started out as the band's sound man, Castellano has played keyboards and guitar for BÖC since 2004. The Ron 'Bumblefoot' Thal (Guns N' Roses)-mentored musician was a co-producer of the new record and a vital element in it being made, and Bloom has no hesitation in singling him out for generous praise.

"Richie was the album's pivot man," he states. "He became one of our three featured vocalists and also contributed several songs. We're happy that the touring band [completed by bassist Danny Miranda, who played on *Curse Of The Hidden Mirror*, and comparative newcomer Jules Radino on drums] appears on a record at last. This is something new for BÖC fans."

The band also opted to film a series of promo videos in as close to isolation as possible, using a deserted high school on Long Island equipped with its own mini-TV station.

"We all met there at eight-thirty a.m., everyone was wearing masks, and each guy did his part alone in front of the green screen," Bloom explains.

"What I like about the record is that it is so diverse."

Buck Dharma

"We had the place for a day, and all together we did videos for four of the album's songs."

Long-time followers were delighted that the first of these, *That Was Me*, features a cameo from co-founding drummer Albert Bouchard, who belts the living daylights out of a cowbell (what else?) in its chorus. Bouchard was famously fired by the band before their Monsters Of Rock festival appearance at Castle Donington in 1981, and crew member Rick Downey took his place for what was a decidedly below-par display. Although Bouchard was a key contributor to BÖC's ambitious 1988 album *Imaginos*, as a co-writer and co-producer alongside then-manager and lyricist Sandy Pearlman, he never officially rejoined.

"As you probably know, we did go to the UK with Albert [as a special guest] a couple of years ago," Bloom explains, "and he was kind enough to be a part of that video and also to sing background vocals and play some percussion on the album. Albert freely admits that back in the day when he was let go, he was somewhat off the wall and there has been no bad blood between him and the band for a number of years."

Could there be a set of circumstances in which Bouchard might someday reunite with the line-up?

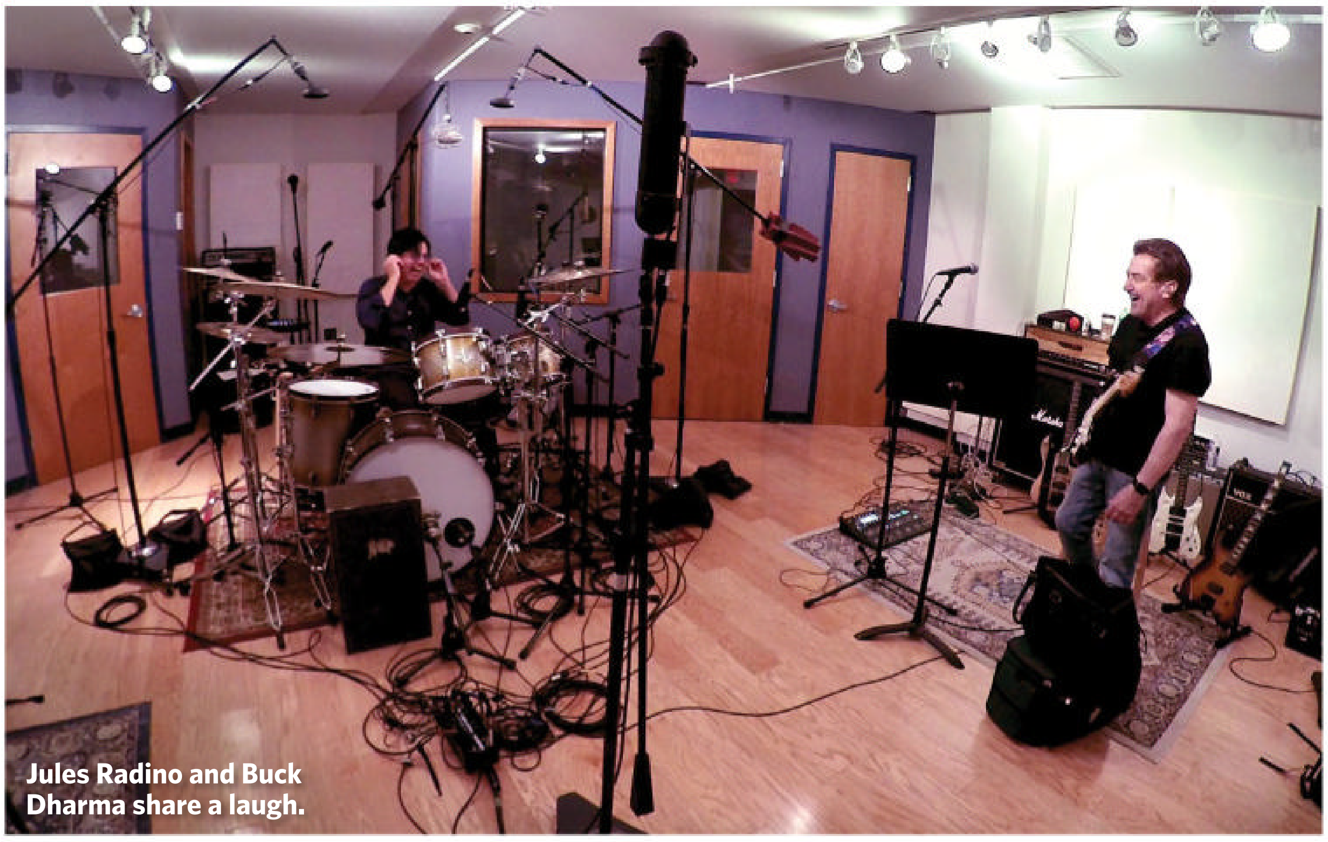
"That's not for me to say," Bloom replies cautiously. "Given how far along things are [with the present line-up], and at our ages… I really can't comment."

The video for *That Was Me* also includes a wonderful homage to *This Is Spinal Tap*, with a roadside billboard advertising a fictional concert with Puppet Show as the headliner and BÖC as support. "It's a little inside joke," Bloom says with a chuckle. "We love that movie."

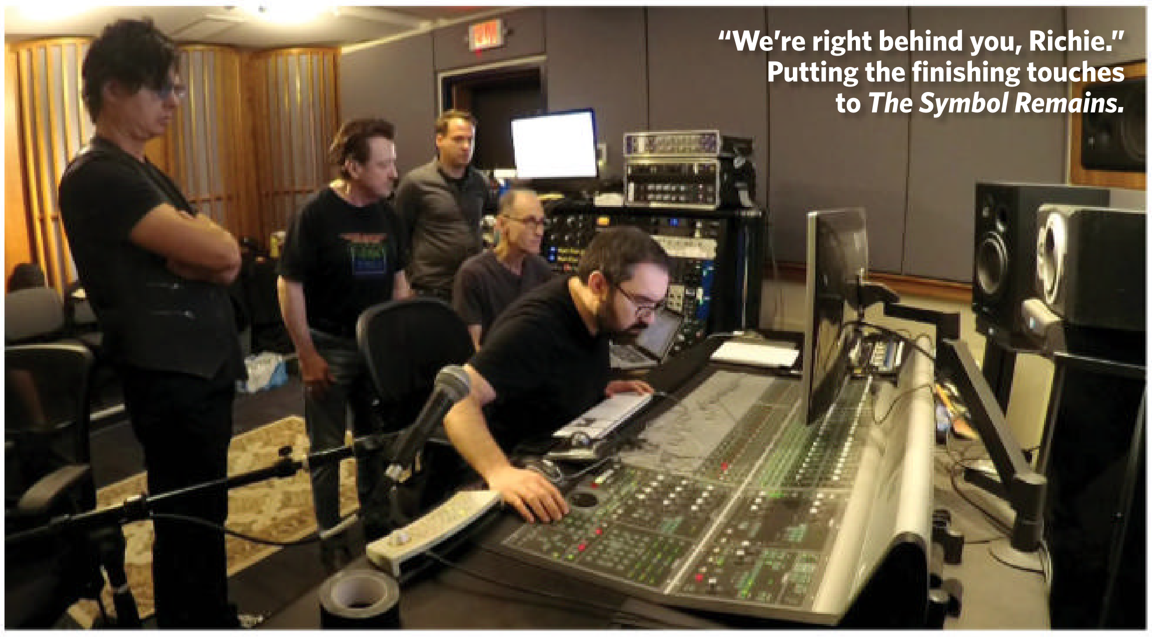
That Was Me is one of five songs with lyrics by John Shirley. A regular contributor to the band from 1998's *Heaven Forbid* onwards, the Texan sci-fi author was introduced to BÖC by Pearlman 20 years ago.

"As well as writing novels and short stories, John is a musician with his own band, and he has

Donald 'Buck Dharma' Roeser is watching you...



Jules Radino and Buck Dharma share a laugh.



"We're right behind you, Richie." Putting the finishing touches to *The Symbol Remains*.

become an important part of our creative process," Bloom acknowledges. "In the past we have gone to John to help us fill in blanks, but he also emails over batches of lyrics that I keep in a folder. Many of those ideas have inspired me to write music. It's a flexible process. And John is an offbeat guy. That's why Pearlman put us together with him."

Dharma reveals that prior to Pearlman's death in 2016 he had considered approaching Sandy – a co-producer and key element of the band's biggest-selling records from the 70s – about becoming involved again with Blue Öyster Cult.

"We were going to ask Sandy to contribute lyrics to *The Symbol Remains*, but of course he had his stroke and passed away," he states sadly. "But we honoured him by using one of his lyrics as the title for the record."

"I have a book of lyrics, and I went through every Pearlman song ever written [for BÖC], scribbling down words and phrases," adds Bloom.

The words 'the symbol remains' had first appeared in *Shadow Of California*, a song co-written by Pearlman, Bouchard and Alice Cooper drummer Neal Smith that appeared on BÖC's 1983 album *The Revölution By Night*. In the past the group's records have had many such hidden signposts for the listener to excavate and savour. "We like to put in things that the hard-core fans can latch onto and make them feel special," Bloom says with a smile.

While many rock musicians of advancing years become detached from their fan base, Bloom admits he likes to keep abreast of the conspiracy theories and interpretations of BÖC's music offered by their supporters. "Sometimes the fans are right and others they're wrong – but I rarely correct that," he says, laughing.

When asked the reason why, he chortles dismissively. "Aaah, years ago somebody out there wrote: 'I love that song *Harvester Of Eyes* [from 1974's *Secret Treaties*] where it says: '*You get laid in the hay*.' That's not the lyric at all, but it's better than what we wrote."

> **"There's been no bad blood between Albert and the band for years."**
> **Eric Bloom**

Just like BÖC's fans, Bloom and Dharma are understandably disappointed that their tour of Europe as guests of Deep Purple has been delayed by a year, until October 2021. "Hopefully the germ will have died by then, and we can all remove our masks and get back together again," says Dharma. If so, expect the band to repeat their original intention of bolting on selected headline dates. "That's the plan – to maximise our time," Dharma explains.

With the band having started out as Soft White Underbelly and had other names, including Stalk-Forrest Group, before they took on their current moniker, Blue Öyster Cult's history is fairly convoluted, although it's universally acknowledged that they began life in 1971. "Well, I joined in 1969, but that's probably a true statement," Bloom says. In which case, 2021 will mark the group's fiftieth anniversary. By anybody's standards, that's a pretty amazing feat.

"I suppose we'll mark it somehow, it depends on how much energy we have left," Dharma deadpans.

Bloom isn't quite so sure. "Oh, I don't know that there will be anything special," he states.

No box sets, documentaries, coffee-table books?

"I'm more worried about what will be happening next week," he shrugs.

And so we leave the pair, excited but slightly nervous as to how the world will respond to an album that many BÖC fans never expected to be made.

"For me, the most important thing of all was for us not to put out crap," Bloom states firmly. "Don and I were sure we wouldn't do that. When you're a band like us you can't just fool people – you know, scribble down a bunch of lame stuff and put it out – or you'll end up with egg on your face.

"We have a bit of a reputation," he concludes with pride. "Okay, maybe some records weren't as good as others. But even our bad records – if there were any – are better than those by some other bands." ●

The Symbol Remains is available now via Frontiers Records.

SESSION PHOTOS BY RICHIE CASTELLANO AND STEVE SCHENCK

TYLER BRYANT'S LOCKDOWN JOURNAL

With 2020 flipped on its head, **Tyler Bryant & The Shakedown** responded to lockdown by making an album at home in Nashville. But how did their livewire, always-busy frontman take to being locked down?

Words: **Tyler Bryant**

Early 2020

This year was supposed to involve a ton of touring. We were supposed to tour with Stone Temple Pilots and Nickelback in America. We were supposed to go over to the UK… That's one of the biggest bummers about this year, that we're not going to get to play over there.

Noah [Denney, Shakedown bassist] left the band at the end of February to pursue his passion of being a drummer. He was a drummer before he joined the Shakedown, and he simply missed it. It went as good as it possibly could go. He came to us and said: "I just don't want you guys not to talk to me. You're my best friends," and we all hugged it out like brothers and it's all good. But that was a little strange too.

Then one day Rebecca [Lovell, Tyler's wife and Larkin Poe singer/guitarist] and I went over to have dinner with Graham [Whitford, Shakedown guitarist] and Graham's girl. We were talking about the tornado, which had just happened in Nashville. And then Rebecca and I went to the grocery store and noticed all the toilet paper was gone. I thought: "That's strange…" The next day, lockdown happened.

March 17

I thought: "This'll be over in a week." Which is why *Crazy Days* [the first single] was written today, at the very top of it [lockdown], not realising it was going to last the majority of the year.

At this point I was only having brief moments of wanting to get out and live life the way it was before covid-19. I love being holed up in my studio. At the start of the quarantine I was honestly stoked to have an excuse to say no to social events that I had no interest in attending. When I meet people when I'm out touring, they ask: "What's your favourite place in Nashville?" And I'm always like: "Dude, ask someone else." I go to the grocery store and I go home. I'm such a homebody. When I come home I like to sit outside and grill and listen to music and be alone and not have to talk to people.

But like most people, I started missing everything. I wrote *Crazy Days* imagining nights out with my friends, going to concerts, playing concerts etcetera. The song took fifteen minutes to write.

I asked my wife to sing the harmony on the tune, and she blessed my demo with her badass voice. I sent the clip to my friend and longtime collaborator Roger Alan Nichols. He said: "You should put that up."

I didn't know that my basement demo (you can see it on YouTube) would end up serving as the catalyst for a new Shakedown record.

March 27

My new pink resonator guitar arrived, and I knew it had songs in it. It ended up all over the record.

I got my first resonator guitar when I was fifteen, it was a gift from my father, and I still have it. So I've been into them since then because a lot of the blues greats I loved played them. Then when I was in my early twenties I learned about Chris Whitley, and he quickly became one of my favourite songwriters. He's probably the reason my wife and I hit it off, because we started sharing Chris Whitley bootlegs and recordings.

Crazy Days was written on an acoustic guitar. I started writing it on the acoustic guitar and I was like: "It sounds kinda country." But when you play it on a resonator it adds this filth, and I love that.

Whenever we write a song, we record it. So we have hundreds and hundreds of songs just sitting around. Cos when we're home that's just what we do. I mean, Graham sent me two recordings yesterday.

April 2

Between the time that *Crazy Days* was written and April 2, all of our tour dates were cancelled. Sure, the financial aspect of that sucks, but the emotional part of it was the hardest. We ▷

JASON STOLTZFUS/PRESS

"The financial aspect of [not being able to tour] sucks, but the emotional part of it was the hardest."

For Tyler Bryant, making *Pressure* was "hands-down my favourite recording experience".

Graham Whitford and co-producer/engineer Roger Nichols.

spend so much time on the road, we're like fish out of water when we can't play shows. I hadn't been off the road since I was seventeen.

The label, Spinefarm/Snakefarm, called and asked where the video of *Crazy Days* that I had uploaded was recorded. Apparently it had been circulating around the label and there was some excitement about the tune.

Our manager had actually called us at the start of the year and said: "Maybe you guys should just make a record at home." Because we were still in the *Truth And Lies* album cycle, so we weren't gonna get money from the label to go make a record.

The label asked what we'd think about doing a record at home. We talked to a few people, and realised that to work with the people we wanted we were going to give them all our money and end up with three or four songs. So we all decided to take a DIY approach and make a record in my home studio. We all agreed to ask Roger Alan Nichols to engineer and co-produce the record with us. I called Roger later that day. He was in.

April 4

We filmed the *Ride* [single from 2019's *Truth & Lies*] video in a total DIY fashion. We pulled the seats out of the band van, loaded in our gear and took a drive. This was just another attempt to try to keep the ball rolling and our sanity intact. In other attempts I built shelves for all of my guitar cases. I'd walk down in our basement and there's forty-something guitar cases on the ground, and I was like: "I need to stack these! We'll have more space!" Stuff like that.

I bought a new grill. I became obsessive about the hedges in the front yard. And I'm doing my neighbours' hedges every other day…

This is the first full summer I've ever had at home in Nashville. It's been awesome to be able to go outside and take care of my piece of land. It really is quite peaceful to do that, and then come inside and make some music.

"I became obsessive about the hedges in the front yard. And I'm doing my neighbours' hedges every other day."

April 6

I couldn't admit it at the time, but I was nervous. Our previous album *Truth And Lies* had been recorded at a world-class studio in Brooklyn, New York, and we were about to start recording in my house.

Oh yeah, and I needed to pimp my studio if we were going to do this for real. I needed to get a desk that didn't fall apart every time you leaned on it. We needed more mic stands, all the cabling, better monitors, more preamps etcetera. I started throwing money at gear for my studio and I don't regret it a bit. I also reached out to the good people over at Universal Audio on this day about getting a few of the pieces of gear we were going to need. They were incredibly supportive throughout this entire process. Shout-out to companies who are supporting bands. We need that right now.

April 17

I had my studio ready to go. Caleb [Crosby, drums] got his kit set up and we were ready to start placing mics and getting sounds.

The whole day was spent dialing in the drums. Roger was the one saying: "We're not going to use drum samples. We're not gonna fix things and do all the things people normally do when they're making records to make things perfect and precise and competitive with whatever is on the radio at that point in time. We're gonna make a record in your basement – let it be that." We didn't realise at the time that the limitations we would have during this process would actually serve as a huge source of inspiration.

April 18

This day started off with Graham and I masking up and going to the grocery store to buy provisions. Lunch and dinner breaks would have to be in the studio. We threw a few hundred bucks at sandwich

Bryant's wife Rebecca Lovell lays down some vocals.

Caleb Crosby, whose headphones malfunction caused a rare moment of tension during recording.

Guitarist Graham Whitford, who along with Bryant also played bass on the *Pressure* album.

supplies, frozen pizzas and drinks. I think people probably thought we were doomsday preppers, with the amount we were stocking up on.

I had a little amp set up in the kitchen area, and started jamming with Caleb on a song, *Fever*, that Caleb, Graham, Roger and I had started writing a while back. Roger gave us the green light and we played through the tune twice. The second take is the one that made the record. It came out raw and edgy and it sounds like us when we are playing live, not like a band that was trying to be on their best behavior because the tape was rolling. We were off to the races.

"*Automatic* was inspired by the touring we did with AC/DC and Airbourne."

April 19

Roger woke up at six a.m. to take the *Fever* files into his studio to do a rough mix. He came over around eleven a.m. and played it for me. At this moment I realised that we were really gonna pull this thing off. I was like: "Oh my god, I've got to get Rebecca, I want her to hear this!" That's how I know when I like something, if I wanna play it for the people I care about.

I'd met Roger when I was seventeen. He was the first guy in Nashville that said: "Hey dude, I know everyone's telling you that you're hot shit. But *everybody* can play the guitar, you've gotta work on the songs, man." He was kicking my ass as a kid. As a seventeen-year-old, when everyone else was just blowing smoke, he'd say: "Come over, bring your guitar…" Over the years he and I became great friends. He's collaborated with us on every Shakedown album, but we'd never had him dive in this deep with us.

April 20

We recorded *Automatic*. This song was undeniably inspired by all the touring we did with AC/DC and Airbourne. They had the most badass driving songs, and we felt like we needed one of our own.

When I think back to those tours, I think about the backstage hangs that we had within the band. The AC/DC tour was so exciting. When you pick up an instrument as a kid, and you look at magazines with these bands playing to thousands of people and you go: "I wanna do that! I wanna take that ride!" And we got to take the ride, many many times, with our hands in the air screaming, and it was awesome.

'Too fast to crash', that's very much the spirit of the Shakedown. I mean, I remember the first time we came out to the UK we went out to a pub to have dinner, and Caleb pulled out his *knife*! You have this Kentucky country boy who doesn't realise that you're not allowed to do that there! And I didn't know any better. Someone we were with was like: "*Put that away*!"

April 22

We recorded *Wildside*. We'd start at eleven a.m. every day, which means I get down to the studio at seven-thirty or eight a.m. to sing. Roger would say: "I'll be there at eleven," and at ten a.m. he'd be sitting in my backyard. We'd work on something through the day, get it to a point where it was ready to have vocals on it, and the band would go home. The next morning I'd come in and the vocals would be done. So for me it was like eight a.m. to midnight, give or take.

April 24

We spent the day working on *Loner*. I had originally written it around an organ part, so it was a bit of an arm-wrestling match to figure out how to pull this one off with the Shakedown. We started hitting a wall. It had been a long day, so we decided to call it around ten p.m. and start fresh the next morning.

Graham dipped out to go have dinner with his girl, and Roger was still hanging around. Caleb was behind his kit when I asked him to jam with me. I started playing *Coastin'* and he fell right in line. I had written it one of the previous mornings after hearing my wife playing some Junior Kimbrough riffs. It felt so good to just play some blues after a long day of hashing through ideas. ▷

Bryant with his new pink resonator guitar. "I knew it had songs in it."

As the record shaped up, we felt like that song would be the perfect way to end it, having opened it with *Pressure* which is much heavier and more up-tempo. We're all under a lot of pressure right now, but sometimes you've just got to keep coasting.

May 5

With the studio being in my house, I always felt like I was in it. I suppose that's the danger of doing it the way we did. If folks would leave around eleven p.m., I'd stay up tinkering with stuff. If I love something, then I want more. So it was a case of: "I love making this record, this record is what I live for, let's do it *more*." And so you end up burning the candle at both ends and looking for a third, and then you find the third one and you're looking for a fourth.

On this particular day I had a few personal things that were bothering me and I also hadn't gotten enough sleep. I was just pissy, to put it simply. We were having issues with the headphones when we started working on *Fuel*. However, I didn't know this.

I was waiting on Caleb to count the song off. We couldn't see each other and the communication started to break down. I said something along the lines of: "Could you please count off the song?" He couldn't hear me. I said it again. Still nothing. At this point I'm asking myself: "How hard is it to go: "One-two-three-four"– bang? Then Caleb says: "Are y'all ready?" I replied sarcastically: "Yeah, whenever *you* are." By the time he'd finished saying: "What's your problem, man?" my pink Strat had hit the ground and I was barrelling towards him screaming: "You're my problem, man." I hit a breaking point and was being an asshole.

I stormed up the stairs. I was shaking. There was a lot more to it than just Caleb and I getting at each other. We're brothers. We do that all the time, and the pot *rarely* boils over. I was just running myself ragged. Roger came up to see if I wanted to keep working. Of course I wanted to keep working. There was nothing else to do.

I went downstairs and said to Caleb: "Is today the day I kick your ass?" He said: "Let's go." We hugged each other hard, talked it out and got back to it.

All along, I didn't realise that his headphones weren't working. Regardless, I think that angst fuelled the recording of *Fuel*. That was the only moment in the whole process where the train felt like it was de-railing.

"I texted my good friend [Blackberry Smoke frontman] Charlie Starr and asked him to sing on *Holdin' My Breath*."

May 8

This was our last day of tracking. We started the day by tearing down the drums and cleaning up the tracking room. It was a sad occasion, and we all questioned if we should just keep going or not.

We set up a chair in place of the drums, and talked over how we wanted [ballad] *Like The Old Me* to sound. We all agreed that we wanted to keep it raw and true to the way it was written. I had recently shared the song with my Patreon supporters. I did a live video of it, and a few of them had said: "You should put this on the record."

I played the song a handful of times, and Caleb, Graham and Roger all agreed that one specific take was the one. Roger said it had made him tear up a little bit. I don't know where that song came from. We had not been over-thinking things, though, and I didn't want to start down that road.

We ran mic cables upstairs into a room where Rebecca and I have a baby grand piano. Caleb had worked out a beautiful part to play. Hearing him lay that down really hit me. The process was coming to an end.

When Graham was done with his part, Caleb added a subtle synth part. We listened down a few times and called it done. But Roger had one more thing that he wanted to try – we got my wife to come down and add some background vocals to *Hitchhiker*, so it didn't sound like so much of a sausage fest.

After that we popped a bottle of champagne, toasted to each other and the record, and listened to everything. The joy I felt is almost indescribable. It was hands-down my favourite recording experience I've ever been a part of.

May 29

I texted my good friend [Blackberry Smoke frontman] Charlie Starr and asked him to sing on *Holdin' My Breath*, which would go on to be a single. He said yes.

I first met Charlie when we were playing at a charity event in Los Angeles called The Boot Ride that some of the guys in *Sons Of Anarchy* were involved in. Years later we got asked to tour with Blackberry Smoke, and Charlie and I became fast buddies. We like touring with good people. That's what's great about touring with people like Airbourne and Blackberry Smoke and The Cadillac Three. I'm so happy that the idea of rock stars being these no-good assholes who are hanging out backstage with their groupies… The bands that are dicks are the people that have the most to prove.

The aftermath

My mental health struggled for a second when the record was done, because it did give me a sense of purpose. The record gave me something to direct my energy into, and when that was done it was like: "What do I do now?"

So I've been writing, recording and making records with other people. There's two more records in the can that have been done here in my home studio. I've been spending this time learning how to engineer, where to put the mics, what to use, and just experimenting and trying to further my knowledge on making records.

September 3

We received the test pressing of the new album on vinyl. Whenever we're sitting in a circle and talking about songs or drum sounds or recording takes, you can't see to that point where you'll be putting it on a turntable. But it sounded *massive*. I felt like a kid.

Pressure is out now via Snakefarm Records.

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PAMELA LITTKY/PRESS

OPEN MIKE

It's taken them 15 years and a tragic death, but longtime Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers "co-captain" and current Fleetwood Mac guitarist **Mike Campbell**'s side-project The Dirty Knobs have finally released their debut album.

Words: **Richard Bienstock**

W*reckless Abandon* might be the debut album from The Dirty Knobs, but the (questionably named) band, headed by Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers and Fleetwood guitarist Mike Campbell, is hardly a new concern. They've existed for going on 15 years now, it just took a while for the four-piece – Campbell on guitar and vocals, Jason Sinay on guitar, Lance Morrison on bass and Matt Laug on drums – to find the time to make a record.

"The Knobs started out as a project to do between Heartbreakers tours," Campbell explains. "I met the guys very organically, and I didn't really intend to audition a band per se. But I had some songs and we just hit it off. I thought the music was really good and deserved to be heard. But out of respect to Tom I never felt comfortable doing it while the Heartbreakers were active. I was loyal to my partner. But in the back of my mind I always thought some day, if the Heartbreakers wind down, I'll focus on the Dirty Knobs."

The Heartbreakers did wind down, of course, and in an unexpected and truly tragic way, when Tom Petty passed away October 2, 2017, at the age of 66, after accidentally overdosing on the prescription drugs he was taking to treat a fractured hip, emphysema and knee problems, among other health issues.

When I spoke to Campbell roughly a year later, he was still reeling from the loss of his longest and closest musical collaborator. But he also reported that he had reconvened with his friends in the studio, working with producer George Drakoulias.

Soon enough, however, Campbell had to put the brakes on the Knobs once again. In early 2018, he received a call from drummer Mick Fleetwood, who asked whether he would be interested in replacing Lindsey Buckingham in Fleetwood Mac. Campbell was, accepted the offer, and became the latest guitarist in a band that had seen many pass through, and headed out on a tour that circled the globe and lasted more than a year.

As for the Knobs?

"God bless them – they were very patient," Campbell says with a laugh.

That patience, it appears, is now paying off. And not just for the Knobs, but also for music fans who have missed the sort of hooky, rootsy, classic-rock drenched tuneage that Campbell and the Heartbreakers cooked up with seeming ease for more than 40 years. That sound is displayed in its full glory, with some twists – and lots and lots of hot guitar riffs and solos – on *Wreckless Abandon*, their somewhat late-arrival debut album.

Indeed, Petty fans will feel right at home inside the bright, jangly melodies of the title track, the hypnotic, John Lee Hooker-style groove of *Don't Knock The Boogie* and the straight-up southern rock of *Sugar*. There's also Campbell's disarmingly Petty-like vocal drawl, which doesn't so much ape his former band leader as reflect their shared northern Florida origins.

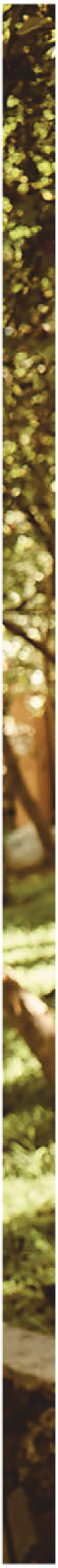
"In the back of my mind I always thought, some day, if the Heartbreakers wind down, I'll focus on the Dirty Knobs."

But there's also plenty of uniquely Knobs-crafted sounds – the aggressive hard-rock riffing of *Loaded Gun* and *Southern Boy*; the dark, heavy blues of *I Still Love You* and *Don't Wait*; the country-rocking *Pistol Packin' Mama*; the smooth and slinky (and drolly cutting) *Fuck That Guy* – that demonstrate Campbell's impressive facility as a singer, songwriter, guitarist and bandleader.

"I'm just following the muse wherever it wants to take me," he says, somewhat humbly. In the case of The Dirty Knobs, Campbell's muse appears to be pointing him, first and foremost, toward the pursuit of having a good time.

"That's what the Knobs are all about," he says. "This band has always been just for the love of playing. We've known each other for fifteen years, but we never had an agenda to be a commercial project until now. And that's the beauty of it – we do it for the joy of the music."

That "joy of the music" you talk about actually comes across on *Wreckless Abandon*. In addition to the album being an entertaining listen, ▷



SHEVA KAFAI/PRESS

"We've learned five or six Heartbreakers songs… It honours my friend, you know? I owe it to him to acknowledge him every night."

you get the feeling these songs are really fun to play.
Well, you used the key word – fun. We're all about having fun, and the songs were written to be fun on the guitar. I mean, this is basically a guitar band. There's a few keyboard overdubs on the record, but mostly it's just the four of us playing live in the studio. I can't wait to play the songs live as a set. It's going to really be a gas.

Obviously Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers were a guitar band, too. But in the case of the Knobs, do you feel like you're pulling from different influences, even slightly?
That's a good question. I have a lot of inspirations, most of them from the sixties when I was growing up. It was such a great time for a guitar player to come of age, with The Beatles, the Stones, the Beach Boys, The Animals, The Kinks, The Zombies – all these great bands that had really inspiring guitar parts. Those are the things that are in me. Even going farther back, to Chuck Berry and Bo Diddley. I don't consciously pull from them, but they tend to come out in different ways in everything I do.

Some of these songs seem to be influenced by harder riff-rock as well. *Loaded Gun*, for example, or *Southern Boy* – there are sections in that one that remind me of AC/DC, in both the overall feel and the sound.
That's a great compliment. I love AC/DC, and I love Led Zeppelin and I love guitar riffs. With *Loaded Gun* there's even a little bit of 'punk exuberance', I'd like to say, in that. So it's not all sixties music, it's everything I've soaked up in my life. As a musician, you grow up and you listen to stuff and it inspires you and it stays with you. Then when you start playing, you find those kinds of nuances coming out – whether you want them to or not.

Happy days and great music: Campbell with Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers.

When it comes to the solos on the record, you give yourself more space to stretch out than you usually had in Heartbreakers songs. Did you approach things any differently?
Well the Heartbreakers had a few songs, like *Running Down A Dream*, where it was: "Okay, we have two minutes here at the end – do something." The Knobs have a lot of songs like that. But I don't approach it any differently. I tend to not work stuff out in advance. I'll have a rough idea of how it should feel, and I think about the lyrics and what the singer is feeling, what they're trying to say, and I try to get the guitar inside that voice. But when it comes to the solos, I mean, I know what key it's in, and I kind of know how I might start, but I don't want to plan it out, I want to see what happens in the moment. And I've found, for me, anyway, that's when the most interesting stuff happens.

I Still Love You is a great lead-guitar showcase.
That was a very emotional lyric and very personal to me. So I didn't think about what notes I was going to play, I just thought about a feeling I wanted to convey. And what I wanted was to convey a tortured, redemption kind of feeling: "I've been through hell, but it's going to be okay." That kind of thing. I wanted to get that out through the guitar somehow. It's intense in that particular song, but it's coming from a place of real feeling.

What do the Dirty Knobs offer you that's unique that you don't get from the Heartbreakers or Fleetwood Mac?
Well, a couple of things. First of all it's my songs, so I have a spiritual investment in the music. And the Dirty Knobs have always been a band that, to borrow a phrase, plays with reckless abandon. We don't follow a script. Whereas the Heartbreakers, the shows left very little room for improvisation. It wasn't that type of a band. But with the Knobs we have the freedom where we don't have to play to a script. We can go out and extend a solo or extend an ending or do whatever we feel like. And the guys are so good. If I decide I want to go off in a certain direction, they'll follow me. So I get to lead the band and take it where I want it to go, as opposed ▷

"This isn't quite what I expected when you said we're playing a low-key outdoor show." The Dirty Knobs in the dirt.

TOP: KEVIN NIXON; BOTTOM: SHEVA KAFAI/PRESS

to being the co-captain in the Heartbreakers, which I loved doing too but it's a different hat.

The last time we spoke, you mentioned that one of the things that appealed to you about Fleetwood Mac was that you enjoyed playing the big venues, and you weren't sure that would happen again after the Heartbreakers. But now you're getting to spend some time in smaller places as well. What do you like about that set-up?

That's a good question. I started out in little rooms, when we started the Heartbreakers – well, it was Mudcrutch back in the day – in Florida. We played smaller places and that's where I honed my craft. I love that intimacy. It's a whole different thing than playing in an arena. Because the crowd is right in front of you – you can see their eyes, and everybody hears pretty much the same thing because you're in a small, confined space and everybody's surrounded by the same walls. You're all part of the experience in a more intimate way. I feel really comfortable in that setting. The arenas are a different thing. When you play the big rooms it's almost like the less you play the better it sounds, because there's so much air and echo and space around the music. If you play too busy it can sometimes get lost. But in the small rooms you can explore the intimacy of the sound and you can play more notes because they're not lost in the echo. You can go into different kinds of zones. So I like both ways, but I'm really looking forward to starting small again and playing, you know, four-hundred, five-hundred, thousand-seat places. I love being close to the people.

"This band has always been just for the love of playing... And that's the beauty of it – we do it for the joy of the music."

In the past when you've done Dirty Knobs shows you've played a fair number of Heartbreakers songs. Now that you have an album of original material out, will that still be the case?

I've put a lot of thought into that. I mean, we are promoting a new record, so mostly I want to play these songs. But I do feel that people that come to see me are going to know who I am and what I've done in the past, and they're going to probably appreciate hearing a song or two from that catalogue. And we love playing those songs, the Knobs and I. We've learned about five or six different Heartbreakers songs, and some of them are deep tracks, not just the hits. So I'm thinking in the smaller clubs I might put one song in the set from the old days, and maybe for the encore I might do a couple more, just so people can take that home with them. That way, not only will they see a new band and hear new songs, but they also get a little taste of where I come from, where we come from. And it honours my friend, you know? I think I owe it to him to acknowledge him every night.

PAMELA LITTKY/PRESS

The Dirty Knobs: (l-r) bassist Lance Morrison, Campbell, guitarist Jason Sinay and drummer Matt Laug.

Mike Campbell (far right) with Fleetwood Mac at the 2018 iHeartRadio Music Festival in Las Vegas, September 2018.

"You have to keep playing. That's why I did the Knobs between Heartbreakers tours in the first place. Because I couldn't just sit around. I need the experience of playing live."

Those Heartbreakers songs are a big part of your life, and they're also part of so many people's lives.
Yeah. I don't take that lightly. I feel a lot of gratitude that I was able to be a part of that. And those songs will live way beyond me. People tell me all the time how much the songs mean to them. I'm very blessed to have that.

As far as actually performing those songs, on the Fleetwood Mac tour you were doing *Free Fallin'* at every show, and you've talked about that being a difficult moment for you. Now that you're further along, has that intensity of emotion softened at all?
A little. I mean, I'm still deep in my grief, and when I do those songs I think about Tom, I feel his presence and sometimes it's a bit emotional, but it's also healing. It's a way for me to work through my grief. But I think if you show a little emotion and it's real, people understand. And they're going through it too, you know? They're grieving too, and it's a way for us to maybe heal a little bit together.

Did you have a favourite Fleetwood Mac song that you performed on that tour?
I liked all the songs. I like Lindsey Buckingham, and I respect him greatly. And it was a challenge for me, coming from a band where I'm used to playing my own stuff, to step into their band and try to honour the music the way it should be. Because it required learning certain guitar parts and expressing them in the right way. And Lindsey's guitar parts are so iconic. Without those parts the songs don't sound the same. So I took it upon myself to try to really learn them – get the nuances right, get the tones right and play them the way they should be played. In a few places here and there I could put my own musicality into it, but mostly I was just trying to honour their records and help the band sound as close to those records as I could.

Do you think that there's a possibility that you and the rest of Fleetwood will record new music together?
I don't know. When I first got the call, I assumed we would do some recording, because they asked me to join the band. I thought about it for about a day. So I told Mick: "Well, it starts with the songs." I was thinking we'd make a record, maybe, and then go out and play. But he said: "Oh no. We've got commitments to do this tour…" Which ended up being almost a year and a half [laughs].

So I don't know what their plans are in terms of recording. But we did have a meeting at the end of the tour, and everybody agreed that they probably don't want to do any more long tours like that. It was great fun and I'm glad I did it, but it was very tiring for all of us. So we decided let's take a year off and let everybody do things that they want to do. In the not-too-distant future, if a handful of gigs come up that sound good, maybe we'll do that.

Well you clearly like to get out there and play.
Oh, yeah. I love it. You have to keep playing, you know? That's why I did the Knobs between Heartbreakers tours in the first place. Because I couldn't just sit around. I need the experience of playing live. That's part of my nature. So this is going to be very humbling, in a good way, starting in the smaller places. And hopefully this record will do well enough to enable us to do another one. My idea is to slowly build it up to something where we can play theaters at some point.

It's amazing to think that, in a career in which you've had so many amazing experiences, you're still getting to have new and fresh ones more than four decades in.
Well, like I said, the main thing is I want to have fun – always. I want to play music, and I figure if I'm doing that, and I'm having fun doing that, then I'm succeeding.

Wreckless Abandon is released on November 20 via BMG.

GETTY

The Hot List

THE 12 ESSENTIAL NEW ROCK TRACKS YOU NEED TO HEAR THIS MONTH AND THE BANDS TO HAVE ON YOUR RADAR

So it's been a busy month or so, wouldn't you say? We lost the great Eddie Van Halen. AC/DC released their new single. Rammstein started posting videos from the studio. Covid-19… ah fuck, who knows where that'll be by the time you read this, so we'll refrain from commenting on it.

But between all the big-hitting, news-feed-filling headlines there was new music being released. *Good* new music, and lots of it. In these strange times we're living in it's a reassuring constant to find ourselves continually picking up on first-rate new tracks from big names, unknowns and rising stars.

Clearly the 12 tracks we've chosen here don't represent them all (we'd need a *lot* more pages to do that), but as a snapshot of the crème de la crème of box-fresh tunes we reckon it's pretty damn good. There's gloriously sleazy rock'n'rollers Neon Animal, politically attuned newcomers Hawxx, glam-punk wunderkinds Starbenders, not one but *two* Phil Campbells (both of them excellent, in very different ways)… Oh, and there's one cover, but it was just too good to leave out.

Check out more tips, and vote for your favourite every Monday, at loudersound.com with *Classic Rock*'s Tracks Of The Week.

Larkin Poe

Fly Away

The Lovell sisters have a knack for making well-weathered classics their own. Throughout lockdown (and before) they've been covering artists including Neil Young, Crosby Stills & Nash, The Beatles and the Moody Blues, and posting the results on their popular YouTube channel. So it's not entirely surprising that they've now made an album of these, *Kindred Spirits* (out on November 20). We're particularly partial to their haunting, slide-driven transformation of Lenny Kravitz's 1999 hit *Fly Away*. Their harmonies might be angelic, but there's a wicked Delta darkness here – and we like it.

Find out more at *www.larkinpoe.com*

Greta Van Fleet

My Way, Soon

Hurrah! The first new GVF song in more than a year, and it's really good! Michigan's prodigal sons just might shake off those 'Led Zeppelin tribute band' tags with this bouncy, embellished burst of sunshine.

Described as "a liberating and jubilant track that celebrates and reflects the band's personal transformation over the past three years", it has at least as much in common with Rush as it does with Page, Plant and co. There are also hints of The Who, a whisper of the 90s and a liberal sprinkling of 60s psychedelia. Tasty.

Find out more at *www.gretavanfleet.com*

The Byson Family *Hope And Pray*

At the beginning of this year it was announced that Phil Campbell had left beloved Brit rockers The Temperance Movement. After that everything seemed to go pretty quiet on them. Now the Scottish singer has returned with a new band and a new single that sounds… well, not wholly unlike The Temperance Movement (the influence of Little Feat and The Band runs through both groups), albeit with its feet planted more solidly in the American West Coast than in 70s Britannia. Clearly this is not a bad thing. Lifted by flavours of latter-day California-dreamin' hippies like GospelbeacH and Aussies Datura4, it's the sort of 21st-century classic rock we'd gladly listen to a lot more of.

Find out more at *www.thebysonfamily.com*

Mason Hill *Against The Wall*

"*Against The Wall* is a song and video about our defiance and determination in the face of overwhelming setbacks," singer Scott Taylor says of this muscular new single from the Scottish twenty-something rockers. "We wanted to depict the raging conflict between being ourselves and being told how to be, by masked faceless suits! We've been making our stand for quite some time and are thrilled with both album and video. We say: 'Bring it on!'"

Moody but fiery by nature, *Against The Wall* has 'A-list arena support slot' written all over it. Like what you hear? Then check out their new album of the same name when it's released in March next year.

Find out more at *www.masonhillofficial.com*

GRETA VAN FLEET: MATTHEW DANIEL SISKIN/PRESS

STARBENDERS: VEGAS GIOVANNI/PRESS

Starbenders

Can't Cheat Time

"*Can't Cheat Time* is a personal favourite among the band," frontwoman Kimi Shelter says of the Atlanta glam-punks' latest. "This single has a wicked string arrangement reminiscent of Jeff Lynne from ELO's production style. It was so rewarding hearing all of it come together with the live string players."

Building to a cracking guitar solo and an impassioned climax that channels Marc Bolan and ELO at their most grandiose, it's a reminder of why so many in the *Classic Rock* team can't get enough of Starbenders.

Find out more at
www.starbenders.com

Moon City Masters

Over Now

We've had our eyes on the Brooklyn-based Steinberg twins – aka Moon City Masters – for a while now, but this is probably our favourite release of theirs so far. *Over Now* has everything we'd want in a feelgood piece of funky rock'n'soul: heart, harmonies and rays of California sunshine circa '73. The band say of *Over Now*: "Groove warning: this song will make your body move." They're not wrong.

Find out more at
www.mooncitymasters.com

This Or That?

Empyre frontman Henrik Steedholdt submits to the world's toughest questionnaire.

Beatles or Stones?
Beatles.

AC/DC or Zeppelin?
AC/DC.

Gibson or Fender?
Definitely Gibson from my side.

Robert Plant or Paul Rodgers?
Er… Robert Plant. No, wait. In terms of tone, Paul Rodgers.

Cigarettes or alcohol?
Alcohol.

Sixties or seventies music?
Sixties. Not really a big fan of the seventies, I much prefer sixties stuff.

Van Halen or Guns N' Roses?
Guns N' Roses – by a good margin.

Fine wine or cold beer?
Cold beer. I tried to base it on if I could only have one for the rest of my life.

Bourbon or tequila?
Bourbon.

Prog or punk?
Prog. I like some of the more recent stuff, like [Swedish proggers] Soen.

Designer stubble or lockdown beard?
Lockdown beard. Designer stubble's a bit George Michael these days, isn't it?

Tour bus or plane?
Plane – let's go large!

Book or movie?
Movie, unless it's an audiobook. I like audiobooks. Louis Thereoux's autobiography is a favourite. There's something soothing about the way he talks.

Stadium or sweaty club?
I've never played a stadium, but I'd like to… Arghhh, stadium, because I want to! That's probably the hardest question so far.

Metallica or Megadeth?
Metallica. For the Black Album.

Horror or comedy?
Comedy. As long as it's edgy and potentially a bit dark, I'm down for it.

Early bird or night owl?
Night owl.

Plant-based or plant-averse?
Plant-averse [laughs].

Lover or fighter?
Arghh… [thinks]…fighter?!

Cats or dogs?
Dogs.

Daddy or chips?
Daddy!

Ketchup or mustard?
Mustard.

Home cooking or takeaway?
Home cooking. I've made too many burgers over lockdown. Chinese pulled pork… too much meat probably.

Posh coffee or cuppa tea?
Cuppa tea.

The HOT LIST

Empyre *The Only Way Out*

Northampton four-piece Empyre created a quiet kind of fire with this commandingly emotive, piano-led performance. Singer Henrik Steenholdt explains: "It went from being [about] the perception that another person is the solution to your problems, to then twisting it at the end so that it's actually only you that can solve your problems. So it put a weird positive, self-belief twist on it."

The band are currently working on their "diverse" second album, which is set to feature proggy elements, straightforward hard rock, "a bit of poppy stuff" and more. Keep an eye out for that in 2021.

In the meantime, which do they prefer: AC/DC or Led Zep? Daddy or chips? Find the answers to these and more existential conundrums in our 'This Or That' questionnaire, just there on the left.

Find out more at *www.empyre.co.uk*

Terrence & The High Flyers

This Could Be The One

If what you need more than anything else right now is something warm and sweet to make you feel that the world is a safer place, look no further than this track. A gauzy, acoustic-based swathe of early-70s sunshine and Laurel Canyon mushroom dreams (from Ottawa), *This Could Be The One* will sort you right out.

Find out more at *www.facebook.com/thehighflyersmusic*

Hawxx *Low*

Described by lead singer Anna as "a song about finding power in your vulnerability and knowing that growth will come", *Low* finds politically charged four-piece Hawxx in urgent, metallic form, blending Gojira-infused weight with angular, emotive flavours of Bjork in the vocals. But who are Hawxx, exactly? And which one of them has represented Wales in chess tournaments? Find out the answer to this and other burning questions in the panel on the right.
Find out more at *hawxxmusic.bandcamp.com/music*

Christopher Shayne *Pour The Bottle*

Described (accurately) as "hard southern rock with a blast of desert heat", this Arizona native's new single should come with its own brand of bourbon, such is its slidin', swaggerin' renegade-cowboy quality. If Blackberry Smoke had been raised on a rattlesnake farm in the Sonoran desert, you could imagine them cooking up something like *Pour The Bottle*. "It's seriously one of my favorite riffs to play!" Shayne says. His new EP *Ten High* is due out in January.
Find out more at *www.christophershaynemusic.com*

Who Are Hawxx?

The multi-national hot new heavy four-piece with killer chops and hidden talents.

Describe your sound in a sentence?
Heavy-as-fuck drop-tuned guitars, wall-of-sound harmonies, a feeling like the end of the world is coming… but you're ready to take it on in your apocalypse/riot gear.

Where did you all meet?
Hannah and I [Anna] overheard each other through the walls at Alaska Studios and had a jam. I met Jess on a function gig in Soho when Jess offered me a cheese string, and we found Iman on the dark web.

Let's talk influences: who are your go-to guitar heroes as a band?
Fredrik Thordenda, Saint Vincent, Matt Heafy and Anna Calvi.

And who has the best voices in rock'n'roll?
Robert Plant and Janis Joplin.

Defining moment in Hawxx's life so far?
Winning PRS Women Make Music, playing the Heavy Music Awards. Meeting and falling for each other.

When gigs are allowed to take place again, what can people expect from a Hawxx show?
A sonic punch in the face by four Hawxx that are very excited to finally be let loose.

What can you all do besides music?
Anna: I knit wooly vulva cushions – follow @vulvas_of_yarn
Hannah: I play chess. I represented Wales a few times.
Jess: I like to go to the gym, though can't really go now so I just do a million push ups at home.
Iman: I run a business upcycling furniture.

What's next for Hawxx?
We're releasing our EP, *Deadlands*, at the end of November, and we've been writing during lockdown so we're in the studio recording the next chapter. Follow us @hawxxmusic and join our kettle of metal.

Phil Campbell & The Bastard Sons

Son Of A Gun

Rumbling bass, chest-pounding drums, fuzzy jet-packed guitars… It's clear instantly that Phil and his Bastard Sons (three actual sons, one honorary 'son' Neil Starr on vocals) mean business on this shit-kicking, hell-raising taste of their new album, the sort of track you half-expect to grab you by the shirt collar and drag you down some alley, in a good way. Campbell Sr's former bandmates in Motörhead would approve. In fact, Campbell himself says of the track: "It will blow your head off!" You have been warned.

Find out more at *philcampbell.net*

Neon Animal *Let's Make The World Rock*

You want rock'n'roll? Oh, we'll give you rock'n'roll alright. We'll give you pretension-free, rock-the-shit-out-of-you, inhibitions-and-good-taste-be-damned rock'n'roll. Which, quite frankly, we could all use a bit of these days. The beautiful thing about the London glam-sleazers Neon Animal's latest is that you completely buy into it – balls-to-the-wall guitars, leopardskin trousers and all. You can hear that they *believe* in the power of rock'n'roll to shake this messed-up mortal coil. And for that we salute them.

Find out more at *www.neonanimal.com*

And Keep An Ear Out For

Joyous Wolf

A buzz has been building around Orange County boys Joyous Wolf for a while now. Having burst on to muso radars with 2017's superb track *Sleep Weep Stomp*, before piquing interest further with an unctuous, pounding cover of Mountain's belter *Mississippi Queen*, they've toured with Slash and Deep Purple and signed to Roadrunner Records. Boasting big tunes, face-lifted classic rock, beefcake blues and, in singer Nick Reese, one of the most animated frontmen of recent times (seriously, watch them playing live on YouTube), there's a great deal to like.

We thought 2020 would be a big year for them, and then… well, 2020 happened. Nevertheless, they've been quietly busy behind the scenes, and back in June their new single *Odyssey* gave us a sign of a band capable of transcending rock niches, while still keeping us rock geeks very happy indeed. Teamed with an animated, sort-of-modernised Homer story in the accompanying music video, it had us wondering when the Disney blockbuster soundtrack offers would start rolling in.

This month *Odyssey* is due to be released with 2019's *Quiet Heart* as a two-track acoustic single, and the prospect of their debut album looms on the horizon for 2021.

Check out single *Odyssey* on YouTube
Find out more at *www.joyouswolf.com*

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Elton John

Ten hours' worth of young Elton's rarities, unreleased tracks and deep cuts, boxed.

THE HARD STUFF

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- ■■■■■■■■■■ A Classic
- ■■■■■■■■■ Excellent
- ■■■■■■■■ Very Good
- ■■■■■■■ Good
- ■■■■■■ Above Average
- ■■■■■ Average
- ■■■■ Below Par
- ■■■ A Disappointment
- ■■ Pants
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MICHAEL OCHS / GETTY

THE HARD STUFF ALBUMS

AC/DC

Power Up COLUMBIA

It's AC/DC – you know what to expect.

Hands up anyone who is expecting *Power Up* to include rap or electronica influences. No takers? No surprise. It's not what this band do. What they do – and with remarkable consistency – is deliver high-energy, groove-saturated music that swings. And none of us would have it any other way.

So what have we here? Cliff Williams has put his retirement on hold and Phil Rudd has swept aside his problems in order for the two of them to reunite the best rhythm section in rock'n'roll. No disrespect to Axl Rose, but without Brian Johnson this could never truly be AC/DC, and thankfully he's back where he belongs and his voice is revved up. Stevie Young has slipped smoothly into his uncle Malcolm's role. And then there's Angus. The enduring guitar master, the only ever-present member, the glue binding it all together.

Of course, none of this would matter if the songs were sub-standard. But as soon as *Realize* cuts loose with the unmistakable AC/DC roar, you know this is gonna be a killer album. That track sashays into the blues-tinged and slow-grinding *Rejection*, and by now you can neither stop shaking your head nor tapping your foot.

And so it goes on. The strut of *Shot In The Dark*, with those gang vocals that are so much a part of the 'DC style. The cascading melodic malevolence of *Through The Mists Of Time* and *Witch's Spell*. And while *Demon Fire* has a humorously priapic wink, *No Man's Land* flashes dirty rhythms and a cutthroat mean streak. All dozen tracks are winners.

Every song is credited as having been co-written by Malcolm Young, because many of the riffs date back to sessions for 2008's *Black Ice* album when he was still on board, but these are far from recycled rejects. In fact they're inspirational.

If you want signposts from past AC/DC albums, then think *Flick Of The Switch* and *For Those About To Rock*. In other words, *Power Up* basks in the glory of the early Johnson era. And that, most certainly, will do.

The studio team of producer Brendan O'Brien and engineer Mike Fraser, who worked on both *Black Ice* and 2014's *Rock Or Bust*, do an admirable, unfussy job capturing the band's iconic sound. It's alive and bursting, concussive yet clean. Should this prove to be AC/DC's farewell album (and who knows?), they will have gone out at the top of their game.

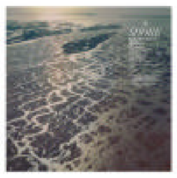
If you're not tingling after listening to *Power Up*, then maybe you should check out the latest rap or electronica releases, because rock'n'roll ain't for you.

Malcolm Dome

Fleet Foxes

Shore ANTI-

Pecknold throws dreamily back to his debut



Dusty mountain treks, snowed-in winter cabins and rambles through tangled undergrowth. The sounds conjured by Fleet Foxes' Robin Pecknold are so evocative of clear-skied Americana mythologies that they connect as firmly with The Band and Crosby, Stills & Nash as they did with the generation of sumptuous shoegazers inspired by their 2008 debut.

After 2017's experimental comeback album *Crack-Up*, this fourth record, with its cavernous atmospheres and chorale-like multi-vocal harmonies resembling the Beach Boys lost in limbo, harks back to that early material in an attempt to create a warm, safe sonic shoreline from which to gaze across turbulent times. It can, by nature, feel like drowning in melted marshmallow over 55 minutes, but great moments stick out like ice sculptures in a snowdrift: delicate, rippling ballads like *Wading In Waist-High Water*, *Tymia* and *It's Not My Season* are sheer pastoral immersion; *Jara* and *Young Man's Game* are white-water roils; *Sunblind* pays tribute to lost heroes like Judee Sill, John Prine and Elliott Smith on arguably the world's wintriest surfing song.

Mark Beaumont

Grant-Lee Phillips

Lightning, Show Us Your Stuff YEP ROC

Tenth solo album shows singer-songwriter maturing to fine vintage.

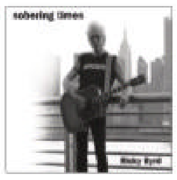
At 56, Grant-Lee Phillips isn't exactly Father Of The Rock House, but it's an age at which a person might well feel the passing of time. And the reflective, autumnal hues of *Lightning* certainly reflect this. *Ain't Done Yet* is defiant-ish but subtly weathered by a feeling of age, padding along at the pace of an old dog. What's great about this album is that it conveys a feeling of lethargy, tiredness, the onset of old age, while never sounding tired, lethargic or clapped out. The musicians assist ably, including bassist Jennifer Condos, Eric Haywood on pedal-steel, and Danny T Levin adding sepia tints with euphonium, trombonium and coronet. The low brass, acoustic swish and enervated country drone of tracks like *Leave A Light On* offer a sublime whisky comfort in the face of forces beyond our control.

David Stubbs

Ricky Byrd

Sobering Times KAYOS

Hellhound on his tail.



As any recovering addict will tell you, staying sober is a never-ending struggle. And this is not the first album that former Joan Jett & The Blackhearts guitarist Ricky Byrd has dedicated to his 33-year ongoing battle – his previous album was titled *Clean Getaway*.

While *Sobering Times'* song titles (*Quittin' Time Again, I Come Back Stronger, Recover Me, Ain't Gonna Live Like That*) and lyrics brook no argument, the music is an open invitation to submit to the addictive power of rock'n'roll as laid down by the Stones and the Faces. There are also a couple of acoustic songs on which he leans into the microphone to reinforce his message, and a fine reworking of Merle Haggard's *Tonight The Bottle Let Me Down*.

Hugh Fielder

Bon Jovi

2020 VIRGIN EMI

JBJ reviews the state of the nation – and isn't afraid to point the finger.

Originally scheduled for release in May, alongside a tour cancelled due to the pandemic, Bon Jovi's fifteenth album emerges newly sequenced, and improved by two songs written in the interim: the upbeat charity call-to-arms earworm that is *Do What You Can*, and the altogether darker *American Reckoning*, a brilliant reflection on the death of George Floyd and its aftermath.

That Jon Bon Jovi ain't voting for the incumbent president is clear. That he's prepared to be so political, even given his blue-collar credentials, is admirable. In many places, particularly on *Blood In The Water*'s view of the impact of Trump, he cleverly asks questions rather than preaches, although on *Lower The Flag* he doesn't hide his disgust about

gun violence, and on *Unbroken* is poignantly sympathetic about post-traumatic stress disorder in the military.

All of the above plus three more of the album's 10 songs he wrote alone, but any 'solo protest album' tag is only half the story. Opener *Limitless* and the sublime *Beautiful Drug* are brilliant stadium rockers (co-written with long-term associates Billy Falcon and producer John Shanks), but such 'safer' ground proves less memorable.

Neil Jeffries

Death Valley Girls

Under The Spell Of Joy

SUICIDE SQUEEZE

LA psych band let loose a barrage of weird good times.

While LA's Death Valley Girls have so far buttered their bread with a creepy-cool cocktail of goth-punk buzz and wobbly, acid-gobbling garage rock crunch, on this album they shed some of their signature darkness for upbeat tempos and sunny-side lyrics. At least sometimes. Opener *Hypnagogia* is a head-swirling, ghost-chasing odyssey that floats from the lounge-y space doom of *Planet Caravan* to the crackling skronk of *LA Blues*, but is mostly an anomaly. The bulk of the album is devoted to throaty singalong choruses and thick, rattling mid-60s fuzz like *Hold My Hand* and the frenetic *10 Day Miracle Challenge*. If Charles Manson had never graduated to murder, and spent another summer lazing around Beach Boy Dennis Wilson's pool, he would have eventually produced this album.

While the hazy creep of bleeding skull candles still waft through DVG's music, this is essentially a white magick album, pulsating with light and sunshine and bursts of raga-punk exuberance.

Sleazegrinder

Pride Of Lions

Lion Heart FRONTIERS

The dude from Survivor has still got it.

Jim Peterik might look a little crazy these days – a 70 year-old with wild purple hair – but this AOR legend, keyboard player and chief songwriter in Survivor's glory days hasn't lost his magic touch.

Lion Heart is the sixth album from Pride Of Lions, on which Peterik co-stars with younger American singer Toby Hitchcock. It's not perfect – certainly no match for Survivor's 80s classics *Eye Of The Tiger* and *Vital Signs*. And Hitchcock's voice, while powerful, lacks that unique quality that two great singers – Dave Bickler and Jimi Jamison – brought to Survivor's songs.

While there are weak spots on this album – *We Play For Free* is so cheesy it whiffs like overripe Roquefort – the best songs are melodic rock gold: *Carry Me Back* references '83 in music and words, *Unfinished Heart* is the obligatory yet masterful power ballad, and with the widescreen epic *Rock & Roll Boomtown* the old master delivers a late-career masterpiece.

Paul Elliott

Eels

Earth To Dora E WORKS/PIAS

E's a slippery character.

On most of his previous 12 albums, Mark Oliver Everett specialised in open-heart-surgery songs that dealt with cancer, suicide and his labyrinthine life, although without any 'I've suffered for my art, now it's your turn'.

Earth To Dora has different mouth music. The melodies are sweet and the lyrics still bear his adult-child cartoon whimsy, but there's a dark optimism beneath it all. *Are We Alright Again*, the only song here written post-pandemic, is a walk in the park for a man who wouldn't be fazed by isolation, while the very Lennon-esque *Baby Let's Make It Real* has a stately theme allied to a whippy old-school guitar solo played by Koool G Murder. Even the shock-value stuff sounds romantic: *Are You Fucking Your Ex* is so matter-of-fact it makes you laugh, *The Gentle Souls* (part-inspired by his brief attempt at marriage) might make you cry.

Max Bell

Drive-By Truckers

The New OK ATO

DBT's second album of the year stares into the abyss that is 2020.

The plan was simple: release *The Unravelling* (and what a prescient title that would turn out to be) at the beginning of the year, collect the richly deserved plaudits and get back out on the road. As the adage goes, tell God your plans if you want to make him laugh.

And so it was for Drive-By Truckers, an always reliable, always excellent band set adrift in a sea of such uncertain times that even now we can only blink towards the horizon and wonder what godawful thing might happen next.

To paraphrase The Smiths, these are heavy words lightly thrown: the Portland riots, George Floyd's murder, covid's creeping death. To their eternal credit, DBT make all the horrors somehow palatable on the back of Memphis horns, loose, Stoney vibes and some plaintive country twang.

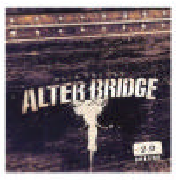
Brilliant music to dream to as the ship goes slowly down.

Philip Wilding

Alter Bridge

Walk The Sky 2.0 NAPALM

Myles Kennedy and co. prove their worth on stage.



This EP is mostly live, recorded pre-covid at the start of 2020 on the band's *Walk The Sky* tour. Six of the tracks come from that album, and sound a lot better when performed on stage. Myles Kennedy is in fine voice, while Mark Tremonti displays his killer touch on guitar. *Wouldn't You Rather* has a distinct edge, while *Native Sons* is a vibrant anthem and *Godspeed* sparkles with lively agitation.

The one exception to the live environment is new studio track *Last Rites*. This was done during lockdown and has a brooding heaviness. It's certainly one of the best songs Alter Bridge have done in recent times, and if this is a taster for what's to come, then they will definitely prove wrong all those who see the Bridge as bland and faceless. This is belligerent.

Malcolm Dome

ROUND-UP: BLUES

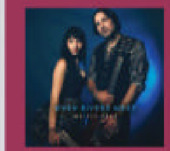
By Henry Yates

When Rivers Meet: songs that give you a kicking but leave a boot print on your heart.

ROB BLACKHAM/PRESS

When Rivers Meet

We Fly Free ONE ROAD



Wheel-spinning out of dodge like Bonnie and Clyde on opener *Did I Break The Law*, Grace and Aaron Bond prove capable getaway drivers on a debut album that unfolds like a road movie. *We Fly Free* confirms what two EPs hinted at: the British husband-and-wife are heavy enough to get your attention and quirky enough to hold it, with songs that give you a kicking but leave a boot-print on your heart.

Bound For Nowhere is the best of the album's 11 cuts, the raging guitars spiced by Grace's pleasingly creepy violin, and when they lock vocals on *Walking On The Wire* it transcends the route-one stomp. Elsewhere the duo show their depth: *I'd Have Fallen* is a hypnotic stop-start dustbowl lope, while *Breaker Of Chains* evokes a sundown in a sinister Southern town, the sound vindicating the pair's insistence on tube tape echo and reverb chambers. But then, in case the cops are catching up, they end with a runaway title track that makes John Bonham's beat from *When The Levee Breaks* sound like someone tapping on a biscuit tin. It's an album to ride shotgun with.

Jimmie Vaughan

The Pleasure's All Mine

THE LAST MUSIC CO.

Respectfully, Jimmie, you're wrong; it's a joy to rifle this 31-track covers set, on which the former Fabulous Thunderbirds guitarist deftly busts the separation between country and blues. So an unrushed *Funny How Time Slips Away* beds down next to a rolling *Teardrop Blues*, with Vaughan's fluid Strat joining the dots and sending both fan bases home happy.

Kenny Wayne Shepherd

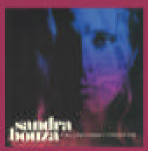
Straight To You Live

PROVOGUE/MASCOT

You'd expect KWS to be a force live, and not a ball is dropped on this CD/DVD, recorded in happier times for Rockpalast. *Woman Like You* is a smash-and-grab opener, and equally strong are the marathon jams: bounce-blues *Shame Shame Shame* and the mournful 11-minute *Heat Of The Sun*.

Sandra Bouza

Falling Away From Me SABUCEDO



On this, her debut album, Sandra Bouza sounds determined not to get stuck in the pigeonhole named 'Esoteric Toronto Blues Belters'. Her voice is superb, and her songs are better, with tracks like *Not Like Me* and *Turn It Up* trading in dancefloor-ready funk-blues with substance and style. She's a smart lyricist too. *Almost Love* offers a neat twist on the familiar break-up tune: the relationship was a damp squib anyway.

Kirk Fletcher

My Blues Pathway

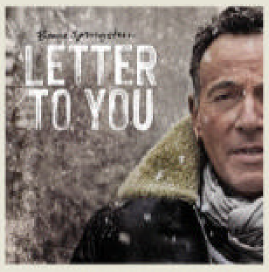
CLEOPATRA

Fletcher can kick a cover about – not even Sonny Boy Williamson could sneer at his pure-feel treatment of *Fattening Frogs For Snakes*. But the Los Angeles guitarist doesn't need anyone to prop him up, hitting a seam of wisdom on the self-written *Ain't No Cure For The Downhearted* that skewers our virtual existence ('*Do you still dream, or are you led by a screen?*').

DANNY CLINCH/PRESS

Bruce Springsteen

Letter To You COLUMBIA



Fast and live, The Boss and the E Street Band rescue lost tunes and toast lost brothers.

If *Letter To You*, Springsteen's twentieth studio album, was the sort of cinematic end-scene it sounds like, it'd feature our hero gazing up at a neon sign reading 'Welcome To Fabulous Las Vegas', having an unspoken inner epiphany, climbing back on his motorbike and roaring away in the direction of New Jersey. Last year's *Western Stars* saw him single-handedly piece together a plush, orchestral masterstroke of a record, summoning the 60s spirits of Gene Pitney and Burt Bacharach to tell tales of Hollywood has-beens in the sort of retro Californian pop styles that suggested he was preparing himself for a pre-retirement residency on the Vegas Strip, harmonica replaced with a lollipop microphone. Instead, recoiling once more from the stench of slickness, he got the E Street Band together in his New Jersey home studio for four days, let the tape run and let rip.

Recorded completely live, right down to the vocals, the result is the E Street energy bottled. The 71-year-old Springsteen's concerns – grief, nostalgia, reactionary anger – might reflect his years, but this is a band that can make the act of writing out a lifetime's worth of wisdoms in the title track sound as wild and noble as any last-chance power drive.

With its skilful weave of widescreen balladry and heartland rock, the record works as a reflective autumn-years version of *The River*, and its roots in the past are sunk even further. Three songs here were written in the early 70s and exude the sort of classical Americana mythology that was bread and butter to Springsteen when he was still applying for the job of Boss. There's *Janey Needs A Shooter*, a ragged-Hammond soul epic peopled by stalking cops and careless doctors; the stirring *If I Was The Priest*, where Jesus, Mary and the Holy Ghost are recast as denizens of a frontier town packed with western caricatures; and *Song For Orphans*, a folk-rock hymnal echoing Dylan's sound and scope, a slo-mo camera sweep across a hopeless nation. Elsewhere Springsteen pays tribute to fallen associates such as Clarence Clemons, Terry Magovern and Danny Federici on vaporous heartbreaker *One Minute You're Here*, and gives two tracks over to memorialising George Theiss, founder of his first band The Castiles.

This is no pure nostalgia trip, though. Both *House Of A Thousand Guitars* and *Rainmaker* take shots at the *'criminal clown'* in the White House, and *Letter To You* is as young at heart as any of Springsteen's proudest moments, a sign that we're some way off the credits yet.

Mark Beaumont

Midnight Oil

The Makaratta Project SONY

Campaigning Aussies don't mince words on first studio album since 2002.

Protest songs in rock almost seem like a quaint relic of a bygone era these days. So maybe it's not a moment too soon for these veterans of polemical pop to return to the studio. And they leave nothing "open to interpretation".

This 33-minute mini-album features an extensive guest list of indigenous Australian musicians, with an avowed mission to "urge the federal government to heed the messages in the Uluru Statement From The Heart", the 2017 petition calling for a constitutional indigenous voice in Australia.

Even if you don't feel particularly qualified, as a Brit, to *'sit down and talk about appropriation… compensation… reconciliation'*, as Peter Garrett urges over the infectious chug and rumble of opening track *First Nation*, the music hits hard enough on its own. Lead single *Gadigal Land* is a stomping, horn-ripped rock'n'soul affair, before *Terror Australia* does the opposite of what it says in the title in a hauntingly sad piano lament.

In case you're wondering what the Uluru Statement From The Heart contains, it's read out in full before the likeably upbeat closing campfire singalong *Come On Down*.

Johnny Sharp

Reb Beach

A View From The Inside FRONTIERS MUSIC

Instrumental shred-fest from the former Winger and latter-day Whitesnake guitarist.

Here's one for fans of the kind of solo guitar wizardry that is the stock-in-trade of Joe Satriani and Steve Vai – although Reb Beach would argue that this is a direct descendant of Steve Morse's work in Dixie Dregs.

Other players on the record include drummers David Throckmorton and Robert Langley, bassists Phillip Bynoe (the Vai sideman) and John Hall, but naturally this is all about Beach and his guitar.

It starts impressively enough with the galloping *Black Magic* (on which the one-time utterance of its title is the only time a human voice is heard), and slinks into a funkier vibe on *Little Robots* and *The Way Home*. *Aurora Borealis* sees Beach's Whitesnake buddy Michele Luppi add a piano (briefly) to the mix, and *Hawkdance* features keyboard player Paul Brown, but it's unlikely that this album will find appeal outside the jazz-rock crowd.

Neil Jeffries

Orianthi

O FRONTIERS

Living on a prayer.

Australian guitar goddess Orianthi gets her solo career back on track after a seven-year gap that included a four-year musical and personal detour with Richie Sambora that arguably did her few favours (and him even less). But whether largely repeating the format of her 2013 album *Heaven In This Hell* is the right way to go about it is debatable. You can't fault her 80s guitar style (heavy on gain and compression) – which so impressed the likes of Steve Vai, Santana, Carrie Underwood, Alice Cooper, and Michael Jackson who enlisted her for the ill-fated *This Is It* band. However, what sounded like a launch pad for her guitar and bluesier-than-Avril Lavigne voice has never really taken off. The same goes for some of the songs here, alas, which have failed to build on the early promise.

Hugh Fielder

King King

Maverick CHANNEL 9 MUSIC

A right royal triumph

With studio album number five, British blues rockers King King deliver yet another superlative demonstration of songwriting prowess – a bit of Free here, a smidge of early Whitesnake there, a soupcon of Bad Company for good measure – led from the front by guitarist/vocalist Alan Nimmo.

Recorded with a new line-up, *Maverick* nevertheless sounds like a band that's been together forever, with cohesive performances meshing together perfectly across the entire 10 tracks. If there's any specific change to speak of, it's probably a gentle shift away from overt blues into more classic rock territory – a bit more Thunder,

perhaps – but otherwise it's business as usual. The ballads *By Your Side* and *When My Winter Comes* are excellent, while the vibe on *Fire In My Soul, Never Give In, Dance Together, I Will Not Fall* and *One World* is one of defiance and heartfelt optimism.

Possibly their best record yet.

Essi Berelian

Crippled Black Phoenix

Ellengæst SEASON OF MIST

Avant-gloom anthems born from strife and separation.

Dozens of collaborators have passed through avant-goth post-rockers Crippled Black Phoenix during their 16 years as a band, but long-time vocalist Daniel Anghede's departure last year appears to have been abrupt and acrimonious. Band founder and main songwriter Justin Greaves responded by bringing in several guest singers, including Anathema's Vincent Cavanagh and Norwegian black metal veteran Kristian 'Gaahl' Espedal.

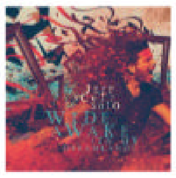
But however troubled its gestation might have been, *Ellengæst* sounds impressively coherent and expansive, from the Morricone-goes-doom-metal epic *House Of Fools* to the soaring prog-folk symphony *The Invisible Past*. Standing out among multiple gruff male voices, Belinda Kordic howls like a wounded Nick Cave on the gloomily romantic *Everything I Say*, and makes a decent but underpowered stab at the vintage Bauhaus single *She's In Parties*. Scattered snippets of dialogue from the 1959 documentary *The Faces Of Depression* set the glum emotional mood, notably in the slow-building Floydian anthem *In The Night*, its defiant refrain '*live to fight another day*' channelling backstage drama into musical melodrama.

Stephen Dalton

Jeff Scott Soto

Wide Awake (In My Dreamland) FRONTIERS

Versatile vocalist's seventh solo album.



Jeff Scott Soto's vocal range, soulful tone and sheer lung power have enabled him to tackle metal and melodic rock with equal aplomb. After a brace of recent metallic releases with Sons Of Apollo and his own band, Soto, *Wide Awake* offers plenty to satisfy fans of his work with Talisman and W.E.T.

Key to his appeal is the fact that he never phones it in, and here he belts out thrusting rockers *Someone To Love* and *Living In A Dream* with grit, both songs garnished with alluring guitar harmonies. The songwriting is consistently good, with hints of Talisman in the funk of *Mystified*, and a nod to Soto's days with Yngwie Malmsteen via the Baroque gallop of *Paper Wings*.

Rich Davenport

Fuzz

/// IN THE RED

San Franciscan proto-metal power trio return with more amplifier worship.

Fuzz are probably best-known for their drummer, contemporary garage-rock icon Ty Segall. But the band's propulsive force is Segall's touring sideman, guitarist/vocalist Charles Moothart, a one-man riff machine who boulders through this album's eight meaty proto-metal jammers with all the sledgehammer force of one-time Blue Cheer man Randy Holden. That's not to say that this album is all about the bludgeon – the songs have hooks and choruses and all that happy horseshit – but, hot dog, does this dude wail. *Nothing People* is the clear winner of the bunch, a heavy rocker with a devastating hook and some Hendrix-y guitar pyrotechnics, but there are plenty of highlights, from the fiery Stooges homage *Mirror* to the positively slinky raw blooze of *Blind To Vines*. For hard-core stoner-rock types, there's also a couple of mega-jams (*Time Collapse, End Returning*), but *III* mostly avoids the genre's penchant for endless navel gazing and just delivers the ear-shattering goods.

Sleazegrinder

Puscifer

Existential Reckoning BMG

Maynard James Keenan retreats to his happy place for new intergalactic adventures.

While Tool were the band that made him famous, Maynard James Keenan always seems at his most content with Puscifer, basically a solo project with a revolving cast of collaborators that allows his imagination to run riot. With *Existential Reckoning* he appears to be floating in space as this collection of coldly beautiful electronica unfolds.

It's the kind of album people in hotbox bedrooms shrouded in weed smoke will pore over for years, trying to unpick the narrative at the heart of it all, which appears to take in environmental angst, human tendencies toward self-destruction, alien life and at least one character who appears to be transitioning into full cyborg. This is a vintage kind of futurism, a 1980s vision of what could lie ahead in the present day, with Keenan's contemptuous tones warmed by vocals from British singer Carina Round. And while it occasionally drifts into self-parody – *Gray Area* has definite shades of *Flight Of The Conchords* – when *Fake Affront* breaks into a moment of sheer fury ('*Far right, far left, same shit, you can drop the fake affront, pompous ass*') it's all the more powerful for the glacial build-up.

Emma Johnston

Elvis Costello

Hey Clockface CONCORD

His aim is still true.

Some 50 years into his career, Costello is now a kind of pub-rock Bowie, with enough changes of style and direction to satisfy the most fidgety chameleon.

Now he releases an album that pays homage to all his directions, new and old, in a way that's only intentionally jarring. There are crooned piano ballads like the gorgeous *Byline*, vignettes like *Whirlwind* and *They're Not Laughing At Me Now*, splenetic *Blood And Chocolate* noise blarts like the splendid *No Flag*, and spoken-words bits like *Revolution #49*. If all of this sounds like disassociated chaos, it's not (except when it is). The 14 tracks add up to a brilliant work full of confidence and ideas, all laid out on a massive canvas of invention and variety.

David Quantick

ROUND-UP: MELODIC ROCK

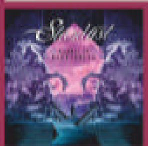
By Dave Ling

Stardust: debut album suggests they have plenty more to offer.

Stardust

Highway To Heartbreak

FRONTIERS



For a single agonising moment, it looked as though Stardust had dropped the ball. With *Runaway*, the opening number of this, their full-length debut album, the Hungarian band knock the ball clean out of the park with a combination of rhythm guitarist Adam Stewart's crystalline vocals, a hook of pure gold, and the interplay between keyboards and guitar.

But then comes – gulp! – a remake of Pat Benatar's *Heartbreaker*. It's a decent enough rendition, and nobody minds a cover when it's done with expertise and a little spin, but c'mon – two songs in?! Thankfully, what follows blows those doubts out of the water with ease.

Four years ago Stardust whetted our appetite with an EP produced by Michael Wagener. Now, thanks to songwriting help from Mark Spiro and Tommy Denander, the band have risen to the challenge of the next step. *Highway To Heartbreak* suggests they have plenty more to offer, although with Spiro having a major hand in almost half of these dozen songs it'll be interesting to see how independent they become.

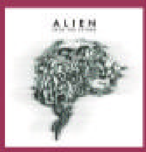
Louisiana's LeRoux

One Of Those Days GULF COAST

This one snuck out in the summertime and deserves mention here (in fact, but for a lack of a decent photo it would have been the lead choice). With past members including Terry Brock and the late Fergie Frederiksen, LeRoux continue to marinade delicious soft rock with Cajun spices. Their first album in a decade, *One Of Those Days* was produced by Jeff Glixman and satisfies in every way.

Alien

Into The Future AOR HEAVEN



In the name of Spock, what were you thinking, Alien? For reasons best known to themselves – their website suggests it's due to seeking the addition of younger fans – the veteran Swedes have toughened up their sound on this sixth album. Next time around please file this mediocrity under 'Mid-life crisis' and, should your fans forgive you, get back to what you do best.

Signal Red

Alien Nation ESCAPE MUSIC

Despite the involvement of others including Steve Newman on bass, Signal Red are a duo of frontman Lee Small (Lionheart, Phenomena, Shy and more) and guitarist/keyboard player Steve Grocott, currently a member of Ten. This second album reapplies the formula of 2018's well-received *Under Radar*, with forceful song structures, deep-tread melodies, Small's exquisite voice and Grocott's fret-melting.

PJ Farley

Accent The Change HIGHVOLMUSIC

Four years after *Boutique Sound Frames*, Trixter's bassist is back with a second solo record. The New Jersey man packs an inoffensive voice, and his kick-around pop-rock ditties such as *Wait And Fade, Walking Backwards* and *Chokehold* are bouncy, direct and distinctly hummable enough, but it's the excellent *High* than confirms a talent for crafting tunes of depth and substance.

MIKE RODWAY/PRESS

Black Stone Cherry

The Human Condition *MASCOT*

Goodbye Kentucky, hello radio-friendly rock.

It's customary, if not a legal requirement, for bands from the American south to spend much of their media time telling everyone just how much they love the old country. And last time we looked, Black Stone Cherry were tapping deeper than ever into the cultural heritage of their homeland, while coating it in a reliably thunderous hard rock crunch.

On 2018's *Family Tree*, which followed the rootsy, home-lovin' *Kentucky*, their sound was unearthing roots in gnarly blues riffs and southern rock, while promising touches of vintage R&B were also creeping in. But on studio album number seven they seem to have one eye back on the road to American rock's heartland, with *The Human Condition* aiming squarely at the centre of the radio dial, where hook-centric drive-time bangers reside.

There's still a gnawing rage gnashing away beneath many of these songs, not least on opening salvo *Ringin' In My Head*, which seems to speak, either side of a yell-along chorus, to the personal demons that guitarist/lead vocalist Chris Robertson has battled over the years. *The Chain* acknowledges darkly that *'we've all been living in pain'*, before exhorting us to *'fight for one another'*, then *I'm In Love With The Pain* manages to get an air-punching anthem out of an addiction to a toxic relationship. Even their cover of Electric Light Orchestra's *Don't Bring Me Down*, when delivered by Robertson's angst-ridden rasp and underpinned by a snarly reading of the central guitar riff, sounds considerably more malevolent than the effusive original.

Elsewhere, though, the strokes are broader still. *When Angels Learn To Fly* has a string section on it, such is its epic ambitions, and *If My Heart Had Wings* (yes, the cliché police might take a dim view of some of this) is a full-on, phones-aloft power ballad in the vein of *Stay*. With this and several other tunes, Black Stone Cherry try just a little too hard to create rock'n'roll earworms, but they're without the pithy attitude of previous crowd pleasers like *White Trash Millionaire*, and although they grab you pretty instantly they don't all leave a lasting mark. Still, their bruised, battered heart is still pumping on songs like album closer *Keep On Keepin' On*, as Robertson asserts: *'Through all the blood and all the tears, I'm here laughing at my fears.'*

This is a band with nothing to prove to their loyal worldwide fan base, and they sound best when they're not so eager to please.

Johnny Sharp

Phil Campbell And The Bastard Sons

We're The Bastards

NUCLEAR BLAST

It's a family affair, episode two.

After charging out of the traps with up-and-at-'em anthem *We're The Bastards*, the Campbell family's second album barely lets up until its halfway point with the harmonica-driven blues of *Desert Song* (echoes of *Dark Days* from their debut). True, there's an acoustic guitar intro to fourth song *Born To Roam*, which eventually settles into something like down-home bluesy Americana, but it's quickly back to type with *Animals* (one of three or four here that might have worked for Phil Campbell's previous band, Motörhead). The superb *Keep Your Jacket On* proves that rocking fast and hard is meat and drink to the Bastards, and they often improve when angry, as on *Bite My Tongue*, the Pantera-like *Hate Machine* and even the punky *Destroyed* (liberally sprinkled with *'Fuck you!'*s).

The so-so *Riding Straight To Hell* misfires, and curve-ball closer *Waves* could be by a different band, but *Lie To Me* (on which Neil Starr's vocals soar over an unlikely mix of AOR stylings and a riff that Tony Iommi would be happy to claim) adds an unexpected twist to the unrelenting attack.

Neil Jeffries

Lunatic Soul

Through Shaded Woods

KSCOPE

Prog-metal side project gets root-and-branch overhaul.

Riverside singer/bassist Mariusz Duda has long used his Lunatic Soul alias as an outlet to explore musical territory away from his main band's grandstanding art-rock. His seventh album under that name sees him veering sharply away from Lunatic Soul's brooding electronic textures towards something more ancient and elemental

Inspired by the forests and landscapes of rural Poland where Duda grew up, *Through Shaded Woods* sounds like it has beamed in from some long-forgotten age. There's an unearthly beauty to *Oblivion*'s ritualistic drums and wordless chants, and the title track is a shamanic hymnal that ends with the crunch of footsteps on a woodland floor. But the *Countryfile*-goes-native reveries are punctured by the odd burst of jarring distortion and Duda's heavily treated vocals, a reminder that, as enticing as the past may be, you can never escape the present.

Dave Everley

Professor And The Madman

Séance *FULLERTONE*

Concept album featuring former Damned rhythm section.

A coalition of South California and UK punk. Alfie Agnew and Sean Elliott are West Coast veterans, while Paul Gray and Rat Scabies played bass and drums respectively with The Damned back in 1980. They keep things tight and locked down here while Agnew and Elliott, on guitars, vocals and keyboards, explore a range of styles, echoing the Beach Boys, The Who and Hüsker Dü, among others.

The concept of this album involves dual forces looking to serve judgment of mankind. This enables Agnew and Elliott to reflect honestly on the reality of their own lives as long-term musicians, as on *So Long* and *Real Me*. *Man With Nothing To Lose* is a plea to set the clock back, referencing The Damned back in the day. Finally, with *New World* mankind is given a second chance and a warning.

An odd mix of the grandiloquent and the personal.

David Stubbs

Raging Speedhorn

Hard To Kill *RED WEED R*

Brit-noise bruisers get ready to rumble on album number six.

It's always kicking-out time on a Friday night in the world of Raging Speedhorn. Not so much a band as a drunken punch-up waiting to happen, the Corby terrors show no sign of slowing down or growing up 21 years after they first came out swinging.

This sixth album is as bolshy and bulletproof as its title proclaims. *'Blood on my hands and you on the floor,'* gargle co-vocalists Frank Regan and Dan Cook on the come-and-

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have-a-go rumble of *Spitfire*, while the filth-encrusted riffs that power *The Beast* and *Doom Machine* sound like they're been wrenched from the dark, satanic steelworks that once dominated their home town.

An astoundingly respectful version of T.Rex's *Children Of The Revolution* aside, it's all as subtle as being hit in the nut sack with a TK Maxx sock stuffed full of pool balls. But subtlety has never been Speedhorn's game. Not when there's a whole world out there waiting to be fought.

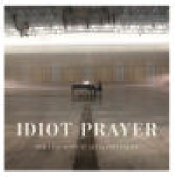
Dave Everley

Nick Cave

Idiot Prayer: Nick Cave Alone at Alexandra Palace

MUTE

A demonstration of the power of stripped-back simplicity.



This is masterful: a live album and film, recorded at the height of the covid lockdown in June at London's iconic Alexandra Palace, streamed globally on July 23. Cave alone at a grand piano and with his thoughts, surrounded by a great vat of emptiness and minus his solid musical support, artfully and without ceremony brings in silence and loneliness as a third instrument, and ploughs his way through a back catalogue and newer songs that are littered with remorse and religion and dark humour, always shaped by unyielding events. *The Mercy Seat* is stately in a way it's never been heard before; *Galleon Ship* near impossible to hear; *The Ship Song* magnificent and brooding; *Girl In Amber* bleakly powerful and so human.

Intense and stripped back, with only his own art to fall back on, Cave cuts a truly formidable figure. This is an album you will return to again and again.

Everett True

Snowy White

Something On Me

SOULFOOD MUSIC

Musical forecast: blue and Snowy.

If you'll pardon the meteorological pun, there's been a flurry of Snowy activity this year. The *Lucky Star* anthology gathered his early solo albums, and his underrated stint in Thin Lizzy received a fiery live showcase on their *Rock Legends* box set. His new *Something On Me* is proof positive that White's present is as compelling as his past, offering varied blue moods from fresh angles. The title track's late-night vibe is enlivened by tasteful acoustic and electric licks, setting a precedent for White's eloquent guitar playing across the record. *Another Blue Night* and *One More Traveller* impress with supple grooves, fluent fretwork and lived-in vocals, while *Commercial Suicide*'s soundtrack atmospherics give White room to let rip.

Rich Davenport

Diamond Head

Lightning To The Nations 2020

SILVER LINING MUSIC

Fortieth-anniversary reworking of classic debut fails to light up the sky.

Strange to think now that at one point in time we all put our faith in the future of hard rock to Sean Harris: a man in an aerobic headband who had the snake-hip shake and familiar scream of a young Robert Plant. Combine that with Brian Tatler's rattling guitar and you had a band that felt like they could shake up musical history.

Forty years later, and Tatler is still raging against the machine, with a new incarnation of Diamond Head that can still turn heads live. But this reimagining of that classic, early incarnation sounds like they're trying to beat those memories to death. Case in point: their version of *The Prince* sounds like them covering the Metallica take on the Diamond Head song. Confused? You will be. Not least when DH cover Metallica's *No Remorse* as an extra. Who made who?

Philip Wilding

The Dirty Knobs

Wreckless Abandon

UMC/VIRGIN

Mike Campbell's ridiculously named hobby band steps into the limelight.

Across five decades, Mike Campbell averaged two co-writes on every album Tom Petty released. On this, his first solo project since Petty passed away, it's clear that alongside a lesser songwriter he could have had a far higher quota.

Heartbreakers fans will love *Wreckless Abandon* because it tells great stories. That Campbell's singing voice is not a million miles from Petty's is the cherry on top. And although Campbell describes this as "rougher edged" than his work with Petty, that chiefly means the guitars are louder.

From the irresistible title track to foot stompers such as *Southern Boy*, from sardonic humour (*Sugar*) to heavy blues (*Don't Wait* etc), the quality never dips. There are nods to JJ Cale (*Fuck That Guy*), John Lee Hooker (*Don't Knock The Boogie*) and, naturally, his old friend Tom, not least on the country jangle of *Irish Girl*. In short: 13 hugely enjoyable songs that all sound like old friends.

Neil Jeffries

The Cadillac Three

Tabasco & Sweet Tea

BIG MACHINE

Nashville 'country fuzz' trio head on down to funkytown.

It's kind of fitting that The Cadillac Three's new album sounds like it does. And indeed that it was released without warning. Think about it: we're in a period of global pandemic, major political unrest, ever-shifting restrictions and guidance… Quite frankly, it was about time we threw our hands up and enjoyed a tripped-out, funkalicious ode to drinking, smoking and shagging. Not to mention that this is an album so drenched in 70s funk and bong smoke that it could've been sponsored by George Clinton and James Brown – if those dudes were fuelled by Jack Daniel's and cornbread.

Arguably, we should have seen this coming. On previous album *Country Fuzz* TC3 got their funk on with *The Jam*, and seemed to have had a splendid time doing it. Here, from the tone-setting titular opener, the good times and ganja keep on coming. *Road Soda* sounds like James Brown and a load of rodeo guys having a lock-in at a Waffle House. The chorus of *Turn The Radio On* brings to mind Kool And The Gang's *Get Down On It*, with a beefier backbone. Swampy freak-fest *Devil's Lettuce* actually features long *inhales*… All of it freewheeling but super-tight.

Fire up the lava lamp and call the JBs, we're coming over…

Polly Glass

BEST OF THE REST

Other new releases out this month.

Heavy Salad

Cult Casual DIPPED IN GOLD

With a loose backwards-through-life concept, the Mancunian psych-popping acid-rock trio charm and challenge with a pan-generic melange of cheerfully nihilistic post-Flaming Lips wit and whimsy. **7/10**

William Shatner

The Blues CLEOPATRA

The blues idiom demands impassioned performances of its vocal exponents. As if Shatner needed any encouragement to ham it up, but what a supporting cast. Not least a soaring Ritchie Blackmore. **6/10**

The Medicine Dolls

Filth And Wisdom JUST MUSIC

Cape Town's Medicine Dolls personify a record collection dominated by Cramps, Birthday Party and JAMC. Kitschy camp, surf-goth reverb predominates, along with The Cure's vocal hiccups and hair. **6/10**

Yes

The Royal Affair Tour: Live From Las Vegas BMG

Although missing Chris Squire, last year's Yes (with Billy Sherwood on bass) deliver a set fresh with surprises: Lennon's *Imagine*, boldly reclaimed by its original drummer Alan White, and Paul Simon's *America*. **6/10**

Black Foxxes

Black Foxxes SEARCH & DESTROY/UMG

A new self-titled beginning on this third from sole survivor Mark Holley, following a rift that saw 66.6 per cent of Exeter's post-grunge hopefuls replaced. Loud's louder, quiet's quieter, emotions intensified, tangibly blacker. **8/10**

Carcass

Despicable EP NUCLEAR BLAST

Stopgap four-track from Steer and Walker's gore-grind pioneers featuring 2019's *Under The Scalpel Blade* comeback opus, but the savage doom diamond here is *The Living Dead At The Manchester Morgue*. **8/10**

King Creature

Set The World On Fire MARSHALL

Sharp, rock-powered old-school metal with an intrinsic melodic edge and a no-shit punk 'tude from a Cornish quartet whose cannily produced debut aims for the incendiary and instinctually ignites. **8/10**

Nothing But Thieves

Moral Panic RCA/SONY

As Mike Crossey's bullishly contemporary, commercially nuanced, radio-targeted production painstakingly aims the Southend quintet's sound at the airwaves, it just as effectively strips them of their core rock classicism. **7/10**

Goo Goo Dolls

It's Christmas All Over WARNER

It's as slick as a Travelin' Wilbury's weasel, as festive as a robin on a log, but it sure picked the wrong year to deliver its melancholic Yuletide schmaltz. Shit's way too real for cynically marketed escapism. Next! **5/10**

Wobbler

Dwellers Of The Deep KARISMA

These Norwegian trad-proggers artfully employ the trilling keys, obtuse guitar wizardry, maths-problem time signatures and upper-register vocals that have come to define their genre's golden era. Yes? Definitely. **7/10**

Moriaty

The Die Is Cast EASY ACTION

Self-styled Devon 'filthy blues rock' duo Moriaty do themselves no favours by shackling themselves to the blues. Their engaging post-desert swaggering can't (and shouldn't) be pigeonholed. No arguments with 'filthy' though. **8/10**

R.I.P.

Dead End RIDING EASY

Dead End opens with a John Carpenter-echoing instrumental that provides the perfect setting for Oregon's four hearsemen of the grunge-metal apocalypse to do their all-out excellent worst. **8/10**

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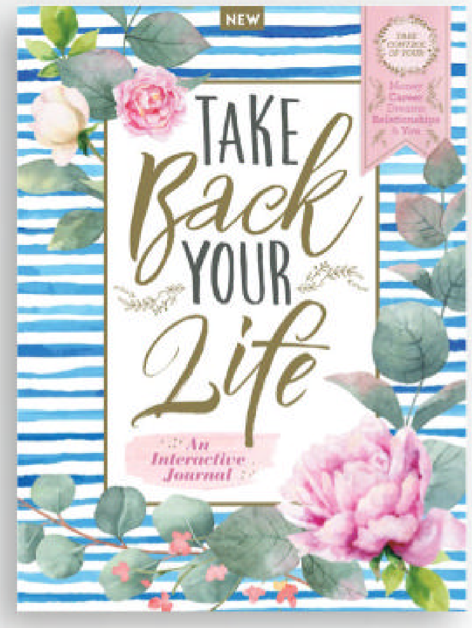

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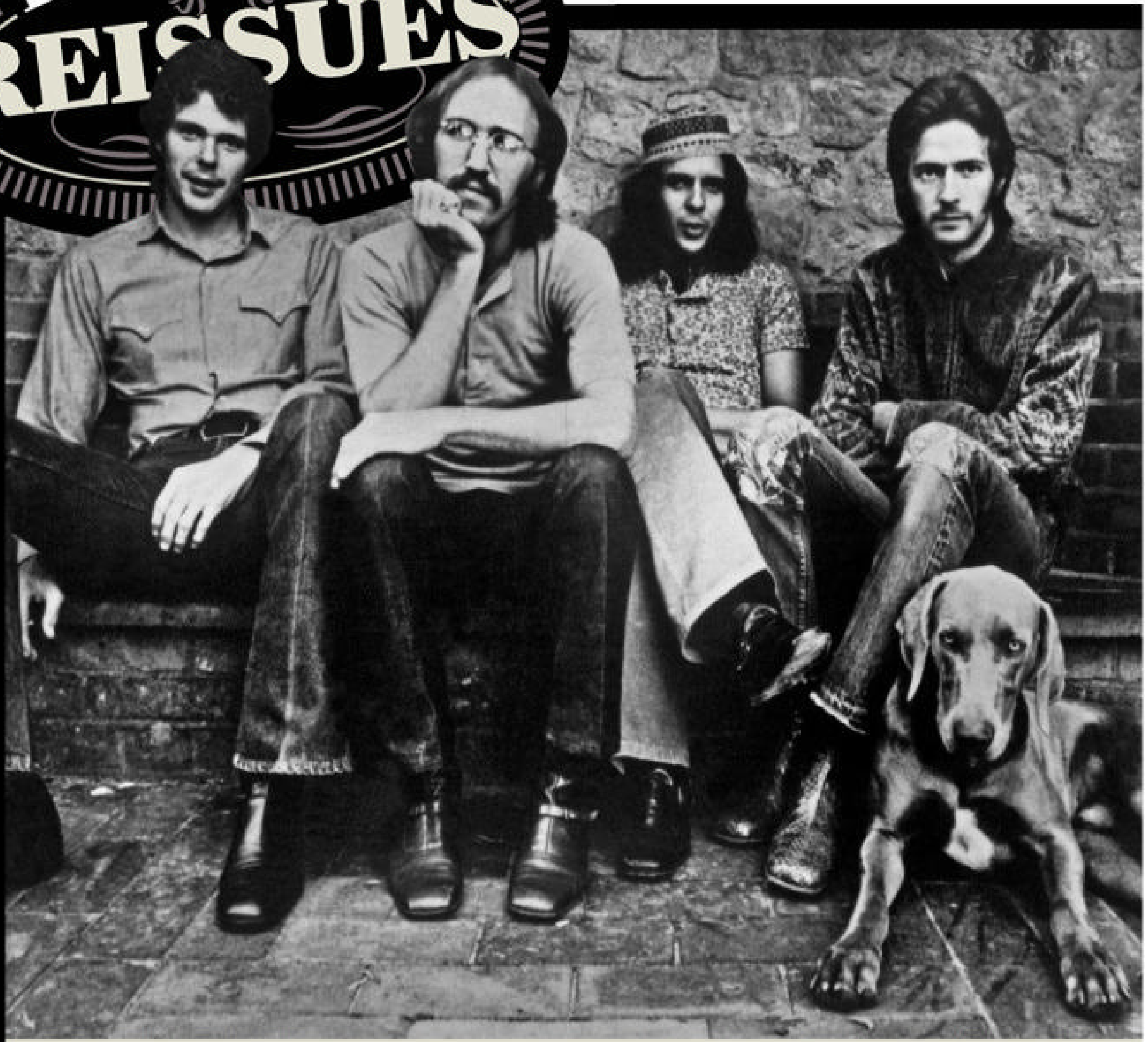


Derek And The Dominos

Layla And Other Assorted Love Songs (50th Anniversary Edition) *UME/POLYDOR*

Clapton's defining one-off supernova gets half-century vinyl upgrade.

The story of Derek And The Dominos and their ever-astonishing sole studio album starts with Eric Clapton craving anonymity after the failure of Blind Faith, and pouring his infatuation with Beatle George's wife Patti into searing song. It ends less than a year later, fans initially rejecting Clapton as singer-songwriter instead of guitar hero, album not charting, band disintegrating in a blizzard of hard drugs. Then in '72 the incandescent title track becomes a hit, igniting *Layla And Other Assorted Love Songs'* ascension among rock's greatest works.

The seeds of the Dominos were sewn by Clapton's discontent over audiences demanding Cream-like air displays on Blind Faith's 1969 US tour. Finding solace with support band Delaney & Bonnie, he clicked with keyboard player/singer Bobby Whitlock, bassist Carl Radle and drummer Jim Gordon, and hired them for his self-titled 1970 solo album.

The Dominos (named by Tony Ashton's mispronounced introduction before their June debut at London's Lyceum) manifested after Clapton and Whitlock started songwriting together. After low-profile UK touring, they recorded a (hastily withdrawn) single with Phil Spector, before entering Miami's Criteria Studios to work with Eric's old mucker Tom Dowd, who was then producing the Allman Brothers' *Idlewild South*. Magic flew when Clapton jammed with mutual fan Duane Allman, their stratospheric dogfights gracing the work-in-progress, including the epic title track.

The sessions were one of those rare occasions when the drugs did work, cocaine's wired storm and heroin's soothing calm forging a dynamic musical speedball on the supercharged *Keep On Growing*, southern-rocking *Anyday*, Hendrix tribute cover *Little Wing*, racked ballad *Bell Bottom Blues* and several blues standards.

Half a century later, the album is still being celebrated, half-speed mastering enhancing its dense, skyscraper catharsis and majestic blues on double vinyl. Packages include the 40th-anniversary set's extras debut on double wax, including punk-speed Spector single *Tell The Truth*, and a TV appearance on *The Johnny Cash Show* that unveiled the wasted optimism of *Got To Get Better In A Little While*. The latter towers among tracks started in May '71 for a second album, including *Evil*'s Fleetwood Mac hoodoo and *High*'s jazz-funk jamming.

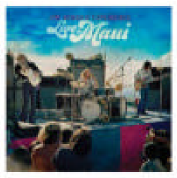
Then they were gone, facing addiction, jail or death, leaving the musical combustion captured and bolstered on this well-deserved monument.

Kris Needs

Jimi Hendrix

Live In Maui *EXPERIENCE HENDRIX*

Maui Wowee.



In late July 1970, Jimi Hendrix was flown (allegedly against his will) to Maui in Hawaii to participate in *Rainbow Bridge*. The film was notable for the absence of a script, a plot or any actors, although there was enough 'Maui wowee' around to ensure that the participants and film crew were permanently and catatonically stoned.

Hendrix's main contribution was to play a gig… sorry, a "vibratory colour/sound experiment", on the slopes of the Haleakala volcano. But nobody told the locals, and only around 400 people showed up and were grouped by their star signs. Worse still, when they listened to the tapes back in New York, Mitch Mitchell's drums had been blown away by the wind and were unusable. He had to overdub them in the studio (a heroic task) for the 17 minutes used in the film – none of which appeared on the *Rainbow Bridge* 'soundtrack' album.

Not surprisingly, the tapes stayed on the shelf while other shows from the summer of 1970 – Atlanta, Isle of Wight – served the Hendrix live legacy. Now the latest digital audio technology has enabled them to be brought up to scratch (almost).

In some ways the club-sized audience helps Hendrix, who hated large open-air shows, and he's positively chatty at times on the first set, which includes a feisty *In From The Storm* and a trebly-sounding *Foxy Lady*. The second set is looser and in danger of falling apart at times, before Hendrix wakes up and rips through *Stone Free*.

Hugh Fielder

Pantera

Reinventing The Steel *RHINO*

Heavy, heavy metal.

After the runaway success of Pantera's 1992 album *A Vulgar Display Of Power*, the band seemed intent on creating increasingly extreme and weird records. *Far Beyond Driven* ('94) and *The Great Southern Trendkill* ('96) both provided debilitating punches to the throat, with brilliant moments, but the band's admirable sonic exploration didn't always bring out their best; some of those odder dirges weren't exactly the fist-pumping fare craved by fans of *Fuckin' Hostile*.

Reinventing The Steel, released in early 2000, felt like a welcome return to the band's stripped-down, 12-bore approach: big riffs, big aggression, hardly any dirge. Highlights like *Hellbound*, *Yesterday Don't Mean Shit* and *Revolution Is My Name* would still be enthusiastically selected on a rock pub jukebox today, which if we're honest is the acid test. If the album peters off towards the end, that's only because the last few tracks were fun at the time but forgettable. *It Makes Them Disappear*, for example, boasts a wonderfully gargantuan riff but forgets to include a chorus.

This reissue presents a new remix by the legendary Terry Date, who had produced the previous three Pantera records but bailed on this one. An improvement on the original mix, Date's take feels more vibrant and in-your-face. Among the usual rag-tag bunch of extras – rough instrumental versions, radio edits, unreleased tracks – the shiniest jewel is *Avoid The Light*, an unusual and catchy song that the band recorded for the soundtrack to long-forgotten film *Dracula 2000*.

Jason Arnopp

Grateful Dead

American Beauty 50th Anniversary Deluxe Edition *RHINO*

Hippie counterculture goes mainstream.

Hot on the heels of the sepia-tinted Americana of 1970's *Workingman's Dead*, an album largely dictated by Jerry Garcia and lyricist Robert Hunter, *American Beauty* (released just five months later) was a more group-focused take on acoustics and plush harmonies. Bass player Phil Lesh brought along the wistful *Box Of Rain*, giving Hunter the instruction to write something to commemorate his dying father. Bar set high, *Friend Of The Devil* and *Sugar Magnolia* took a jauntier turn, while *Truckin'* celebrated a recent New Orleans drug bust. *Ripple* (originally titled *Hand Me Down*) and *Brokedown Palace* were written in London and considered for *Workingman's Dead*, indicating why the discs are often viewed as parts of a whole.

Remastered now (not for the first time), this three-CD Deluxe

GETTY / PRESS

Edition is bolstered by the Dead's first show at the Capitol Theatre in Port Chester, NY, on February 18 1971 (supposedly previously unreleased, but readily available online), where they debuted the footloose *Bertha* and Bob Weir's shaggy dog story *The Greatest Story Ever Told*. By this time drummer Mickey Hart had been let go due to his heroin addiction plus his old man having absconded with a vast amount of Dead cash. Pretty disastrous on that count; but the music is triumphant.

Max Bell

Joni Mitchell

Archives – Vol. 1: The Early Years *RHINO*

The great Canadian singer-songwriter digs deep for the first in a series of rarities.

A box set like this is not intended for casual fans, nor for those for whom Joni Mitchell's work starts and ends with an annual festive spin of *River*. Incredibly comprehensive, and including cuts that most have never heard before, this five-disc anthology covering Mitchell's early years, way before the release of her 1968 debut album *Song To A Seagull*, is a gift for completists, music historians and obsessives. Even for them, approaching it in one sitting is a challenge. Instead it's better to savour it episodically, because each segment ends on something of a cliffhanger: you can hear her evolve from gamine coffee-shop folkie into a masterful, angel-voiced singer-songwriter as the collection develops.

The earliest years indeed find her in thrall to Celtic and American folk standards such as *Molly Malone* and John Hardy, both covered faithfully here, while her take on the traditional *Nancy Whiskey* picks up the age-old thread with good humour and delicate care. But as she gains experience and confidence her unique style blooms. On disc three you can hear the moment the cocoon is shed, as she recognises her full creative potential with *Both Sides Now*, which became a classic.

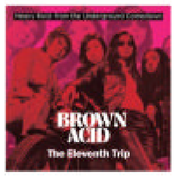
As a document of the early 1960s music scene, this box set is also fascinating, thanks to the radio DJs introducing her sessions who consistently boggle over the then brand-new concept of the singer-songwriter. But mainly that unmistakable voice is the star, and it seems it was sheer perfection from day one.

Emma Johnston

Various

Brown Acid: The Eleventh Trip *RIDING EASY*

More psych, sludge and proto-stoner deep cuts from the vaults.



Anyone who has ever spent a lost afternoon immersed in a YouTube wormhole is aware of the wealth of obscure material now available at our fingertips. However, there is something far more satisfying about exploring a genre via a curated collection. Additionally, with each artist traced and recompensed by compilers – and full-time metal detectors – Lance Barresi and Daniel Hall, the peerless *Brown Acid* series is also an ethical way to trawl through US hard rock's hidden treasure trove.

This latest instalment doesn't disappoint. Pinballing from superbly named Tacoma crooner Adam Wind's twisted lounge classic *Something Else*, via the acid funk of Boston hairies Grump's *I'll Give You Love*, to the sleaze boogie of former Left Banke affiliate Crazy Jerry's *Every Girl Gets One*, it's a non-stop whirlwind of fuzz pedals, gnarly vocals and libidinous lyrics.

A must for acid-rock completists, it's also an archaeological marvel, recalling days when Bagshot Row, a band from Wisconsin, would choose to name themselves after a street in *The Hobbit*.

Paul Moody

King Crimson

The Complete 1969 Recordings *PANEGYRIC*

Mammoth box set charting the creation of prog rock's alpha moment.

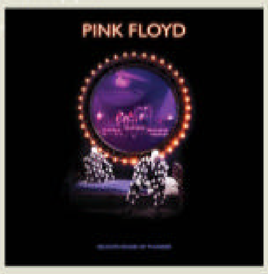
Come the end of 1969, popular music's tectonic plates had shifted forever; the Stones were in the process of becoming 'the greatest rock'n'roll band in the world', The Beatles were shutting up shop, and Jimi Hendrix had made his defining statement with *The Star Spangled Banner*.

Intriguing mutations were afoot too. As Miles Davis looked to rock music to kick-start his electric period, so rock – in the shape of King Crimson – turned to jazz and classical music, and in the process defined what was to follow in the decade ahead.

This epic 26-disc box set (two DVDs, four Blu-rays and 20 CDs) tells the story of KC's *In The Court Of The Crimson King*, one of the most audacious debut albums ever released. It doesn't hold back. Seven of the CDs focus on King Crimson's live work, which here includes their festival debut opening for the Stones in Hyde Park, as well as their appearance at the National Jazz & Blues Festival on a bill that featured fellow travellers Yes. Pick of the bunch are the shows at Fillmores East and West, thanks to a combination of cleaned-up sound and stunning performances.

Steven Wilson sprinkles his magic dust over the original album, while the recording sessions – complete with in-studio dialogue and alternative versions – are for the Crimson hard-core. Best of all are the BBC sessions that ramp up the fuzz and fizz. Sid Smith's detailed sleeve notes make for engrossing reading.

Julian Marszalek



Pink Floyd

Delicate Sound Of Thunder *PINK FLOYD*

David Gilmour refocuses Floyd on this mighty live double.

"Quite a clever forgery," was Roger Waters's judgement on 1987's *A Momentary Lapse Of Reason*, the first post-Waters, David Gilmour-led Floyd record. Clever enough, in fact, that it didn't merely echo the formulas and tones of 1975's *Wish You Were Here*, it cut to the quick of Floyd's entire modus operandi. Just as *Meddle* and *The Dark Side Of The Moon* had refined psychedelia into grander statements that hovered above – rather than at the centre of – prog rock, *Momentary Lapse* was a cultured take on the synthetic sheen of the 80s; sleek-shelled but containing meat.

Its accompanying stadium tour was a similarly smart update, combining Floyd's by-then traditional circular screen, a third eye into the mind of this sonic enigma, with the wire-flying inflatables they'd pioneered for *Animals* and *The Wall*. Their 1988 live album *Delicate Sound Of Thunder* – expanded to encompass the full 140-minute set on this remix initially released in 2019's *The Later Years* box – sounded so stellar it became the first record ever played in space. Fitting, since only aliens unfamiliar with earthling culture would fail to spot the folly of pitting the first disc, a near-complete run through of *Momentary Lapse*, against the combined might of the Floyd canon compiled on disc two.

Opening with a reassuringly vaporous *Shine On You Crazy Diamond (Parts 1-5)*, the *Momentary Lapse* disc, now with the *A New Machine/ Terminal Frost* cycle included, has its moments. The strident, pop-funk *Learning To Fly* and oppressive blues *The Dogs Of War* are among Gilmour's finest Floyd contributions, and *On The Turning Away*, for all its Hasselhoff schmaltz, tugs at the same emotional knots as *Wish You Were Here*. However, with its gated drums and slap bass it is very much of its era.

Which can't be said of the timeless 'hits' of the second set. Here, a monstrous *One Of These Days* gives way to the bulk of *Dark Side*, reunited with its centrepiece in a staggering *The Great Gig In The Sky*, and the slick stadium gleam giving way to a dense, heady euphoria. If grudgingly firing up only three obvious tracks from *The Wall* seems like a thumbed nose at Waters, it also helps highlight Gilmour's own through-line within peak-era Floyd, from *Us And Them* to a barnstorming *Run Like Hell* and *Comfortably Numb* totally owned by Gilmour's ugly/beautiful guitar playing. Provenance secured.

Mark Beaumont

GETTY

Ozzy Osbourne

Blizzard Of Ozz (40th Anniversary Expanded Digital Edition) *SONY/LEGACY*

After the Sabbath came the resurrection.

Ozzy felt he'd been betrayed, hung by a jury of murderers, when he was kicked out of Black Sabbath in 1979 for being out of his mind on booze and drugs. But this unexpected career change didn't turn out so bad for him – nor, in the short term, for his former bandmates. With Ronnie James Dio, arguably the greatest heavy metal singer of them all, in place of Ozzy, Sabbath were a band reborn on *Heaven And Hell*, released in April 1980. And just five months later, with *Blizzard Of Ozz* – its title a less-than-subtle reference to one of his many drugs of choice – Ozzy came back from the dead.

Heaven And Hell was a hard act to follow, not least for a troubled soul who thought he was finished and had acted accordingly in the months after his sacking, numbing his senses in an LA hotel room, alone and depressed. But for Ozzy, salvation arrived in the formidable shape of Sharon Arden, who became his manager and later his wife. With her guidance, a new group was put together, featuring Randy Rhoads, a young American guitarist poached from LA band Quiet Riot, and two veterans in ex-Rainbow bassist Bob Daisley and ex-Uriah Heep drummer Lee Kerslake. And what they created together was the album that silenced all doubters, setting Ozzy on the path to mega-stardom.

Blizzard Of Ozz framed that unique voice in a modern, post-Sabbath context, in which Rhoads's melodic riffing and Van Halen-inspired pyrotechnics were pivotal. In three songs that would become cornerstones of Ozzy's career, his public image was defined: the lunatic in *Crazy Train*, the alcoholic in *Suicide Solution*, and the Prince Of Darkness in the occult-referencing *Mr. Crowley*. There was even room for a little sensitivity, in the broken-hearted ballad *Goodbye To Romance*, and Rhoads's sweet instrumental *Dee*.

Marking its fortieth anniversary, the album has now been reissued on suitably garish black/red swirl vinyl, with the expanded digital version adding bonus (but previously released) material, including live tracks from the *Blizzard* tour and the fast-fingered Rhoads solo *RR* – his answer to Eddie Van Halen's *Eruption*.

Sadly, *Blizzard Of Ozz* and the following year's follow-up, *Diary Of A Madman* (both multi-platinum sellers) were all that came from this band, with its powerful chemistry, before Daisley and Kerslake were dismissed in 1981, and Rhoads was killed in a plane crash a year later. They remain the best albums that Ozzy ever made outside of Black Sabbath.

Paul Elliott

UFO

Strangers In The Night: Deluxe Edition *CHRYSALIS*

Eight-disc reissue of band's era-defining live album.

"I'm backstage", says Geddy Lee, "and there's no sign of UFO, and they're on stage in five minutes. In the parking lot there's a car with its trunk open and a guy handing out beers – this is the Bible Belt in 1977; no alcohol on a Sunday – and there, in full stage gear, are UFO drinking as much as they can before they have to go on. They were pretty good that night too."

Just a year later, UFO would manage a sweep of headline shows that were captured for the epoch-making *Strangers In The Night*, an album that, even by their own admission, they would never top. But this eight-disc set, covering various cities and sets on that tour, somehow manages to improve on perfection.

Judging by Michael Hann's excellent liner notes – the new, judiciously detailed packaging is to be applauded – UFO had a rather hazy autumn in 1978: "It was white wine for the sound-check, then beer, then the hard stuff in the evening," recalls Andy Parker.

Vocalist Phil Mogg might occasionally sound sanguine between songs in a chilly Youngstown Ohio, or at the absolute top of his game, as in Cleveland the very next night. This run of shows as UFO rampaged across America is, with the added weight of history that we've now lost both Pete Way and Paul Raymond, a very welcome reminder that at one point in time UFO were at the very apex of creativity and as performers, multi-layered, compulsive and always just a heartbeat away from the wheels coming off. We really won't ever see their like again.

Philip Wilding

John Norum

Reissues *ROCK CANDY*

Three solo albums from the then ex-Europe guitarist.

In 1986, long before Brexit, John Norum made his own shock departure from Europe. The Swedish band, which Norum co-founded, had just hit big with *The Final Countdown*, but for the guitarist this success came at too high a price. Complaining that Europe was becoming "a teenybopper band", he quit.

Whatever the wisdom of that decision on a financial basis, Norum's ability as a guitar player was never in doubt. And in three of the solo albums he made before he rejoined the band in 2003 he consolidated his reputation with a melodic finesse reminiscent of Michael Schenker and Gary Moore. He also proved to be an accomplished singer and songwriter.

On 1987's *Total Control* (**6/10**), vocalist Göran Edman featured on two standout tracks – *Love Is Meant To Last Forever,* heavy like Europe in their early days, and *Back On The Streets*, written by former Kiss guitarist Vinnie Vincent – while Norum sang the rest, including a heartfelt version of Thin Lizzy's *Wild One*.

Five years later, on *Face The Truth* (**6/10**) he had Glenn Hughes, singing most of the songs, the title track a Purple-hued banger. Norum sang another Lizzy classic, *Opium Trail*, and his duet with Europe frontman Joey Tempest on *We Will Be Strong* (not the Lizzy song of the same name) proved there were no hard feelings between them.

Another Destination ('95, **5/10**) had no star turns, but with covers of Cream and Humble Pie songs Norum again demonstrated his class and taste. When, in the end, he returned to Europe, so did that old heaviness.

Paul Elliott

Dave Edmunds

5 Originals *FLOATING WORLD*

Four studio albums, one live set, three discs.

He's now a venerable, retired 76-year-old, but Dave Edmunds was a pioneer. He was only an occasional songwriter, but he was a production perfectionist who adored uncomplicated rock'n'roll. This collection takes in four studio albums and the live (but studio-enhanced) *I Hear You Rockin'*, which includes rip-roaring run-throughs of *Girls Talk* and *Queen Of Hearts*. Keith Moon suggested the title for 1975's *Subtle As A Flying Mallet*, which Edmunds played, engineered and produced himself in a bid to become the Welsh Phil Spector. On glorious trawls through *Baby I Love You* and *Let It Be Me* he almost manages it. Also self-produced, but much less adventurous, 1982's awkwardly titled *D.E. 7th* featured *From Small Things (Big Things May One Day Come)*, a song Bruce Springsteen gave

to him, but it paved the way for Jeff Lynne to sprinkle a little songwriting and production magic on 1983's *Information* and, a year later, *Riff Riff*. Both albums would have benefitted from more Lynne, but *Information*'s glorious *Slipping Away* was the peak of their collaboration, and *Riff Raff*'s synthesisers upped Edmunds's game.

Unfortunately the package is without extras, and Edmunds would never quite shed his penchant for pub rock, but there's enough here to stake a claim for near-greatness.

John Aizlewood

Prince

Sign O' The Times Super Deluxe Edition RHINO

Sprawling sex-funk double album becomes epic nine-disc banquet.

The crowning, overstuffed masterpiece of Prince's imperial phase, *Sign O' The Times* was a massive double album rooted in the shelved triple-disc collection *Crystal Ball* and two further cancelled projects: *Dream Factory* and the gender-bending *Camille*.

Released in 1987, soon after the multi-talented pop virtuoso dissolved both his Revolution band and his engagement to Susannah Melvoin, the original album still sounds almost flawless, from the title track's minimalist sci-fi funk news bulletin to the glam-slamming monster single *U Got The Look*, humongous party-funk grooves like *Housequake* and the porno-surrealist dreamscape *The Ballad Of Dorothy Parker*.

Given its rich hinterland, the previously unreleased material on this banquet-sized box set understandably makes it the most rewarding posthumous Prince reissue to date. There's new wave, gospel, reggae-pop, big-band swing and smooth jazz here, alongside tape-reversal experiments and Miles Davis cameos. The purple pixie's glam-rock credentials are also abundantly evident, from the sumptuously overblown guitar-blazing power ballad *Adonis And Bathsheba* to the much-mythologised *Wally*, an emotionally raw homage to his bodyguard and confidante Wally Safford, which could almost be an out-take from Bowie's baroque'n'roll opera *Diamond Dogs*.

Despite a few too many overlong Prince-by-numbers funk-pop jams, this fecund repackage is bursting with blockbuster ambition, scorching musicianship and tantalising glimpses of unrealised projects.

Stephen Dalton

The Obsessed

Incarnate BLUES FUNERAL RECORDINGS

Rarities collection resurrected for Record Store Day.

Some tempting offers always surface for Record Store Day. Celebrating the fortieth anniversary of the formation of The Obsessed, this ultimate edition of their long-out-of-print 1999 compilation *Incarnate*, remastered and expanded to 21 tracks, is a fine rag-bag of rarities, demos, B-sides and live cuts.

Although often tagged as underground doom pioneers, The Obsessed always had more wayward dirty rock'n'roll energy than the bands they inspired, main man Scott 'Wino' Weinrich a relentless riff machine who likes to do things his way. Including their debut *Sodden Jackal* EP from '83 but focusing mostly on material dating from around *Lunar Womb* (1991) and *The Church Within* (1994), this is enjoyably raw and groovy stuff. Uneven, for sure, but pretty good for a collection of odds and sods.

Essi Berelian

Perry Farrell

The Glitz; The Glamour LAST MAN MUSIC

The many faces of alt.rock's great shaman.

As Keith Richards once said of Mick Jagger, Perry Farrell is a great bunch of guys. Musician, artist, surfer, businessman, traveller of the astral highways… the Jane's Addiction frontman and alt.rock godfather has followed many paths over his 61 years, often at the same time.

This lavish box set embodies that anything-goes mind-set. Bringing together his pre- and post-Jane's career, *The Glitz; The Glamour* is a sprawling portrait of an artist whose quicksilver approach has made him eternally intriguing, if not consistently successful.

The gold here is the five tracks from Farrell's first band, Psi-Com, originally released on an impossible-to-get EP in 1985. Their tribal sway may be indebted to the gloomier end of British post-punk, but the sense of a man building a universe of his own was in place early on.

How much you enjoy the rest depends on how far down the road you're willing to travel with him. Where Satellite Party's *Ultrapayloaded* is gleaming mid-00s rock featuring Extreme's Nuno Bettencourt on guitar, 2001's Kabbalah-inspired *Song Yet To Be Sung* finds the singer exploring his Jewish faith to a club beat, with mixed results. Last year's terrific *Kind Heaven* works as a snapshot of his entire career: a chaotic circus of colour and noise, with Farrell as the wild-eyed ringmaster. A bonus disc of dance remixes is excessive, but a song with youthful Starcrawler singer Arrow DeWilde squares the LA alt.rock circle nicely.

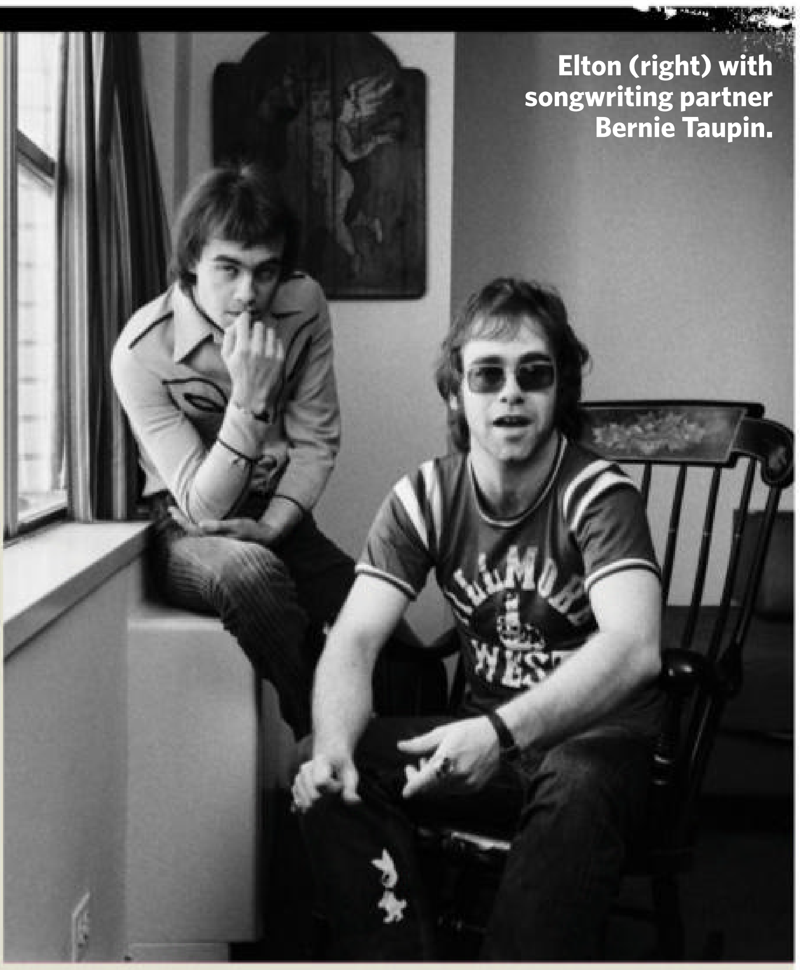
It's a Jane's Addiction-free zone, although it would have been great to represent the woefully unappreciated Porno For Pyros somehow. But even without them, it makes for a unique journey.

Dave Everley

Elton John

Elton: Jewel Box UMC/EMI

In-depth catalogue sweep reveals young Elton's insatiable appetite.



Elton (right) with songwriting partner Bernie Taupin.

So the 148-track, eight-CD set is two minutes short of 10 hours (cherry-picking vinyl versions are available). What, you couldn't stick one more song on, round it up? Mock greed aside, *Elton: Jewel Box* is every bit the treasure trove for fans that it aims to be, gathering a cornucopia of rarities, unreleased tracks and deep cuts that indicate Elton's own favourite career moments. It's an act of legacy curating, giving insight into his self-image and a reminder that his youth was one of scatter-gun energy. It's as if he's saying: "Okay, we've done the movie and the autobiography, and the latest greatest hits package has been in the charts for three years, but don't forget I was once a raw, unburnished talent, hungry, sometimes flailing, sometimes inspired." He's said himself that he finds it "hard to comprehend" how prolific he and lyricist Bernie Taupin were in the early days.

First, though, come two discs of deep cuts, his personal less-familiar choices. He's clearly keen on his Leon Russell collaborations, and on the *Captain Fantastic* album – his finest – which yields the beautiful *We All Fall In Love Sometimes*. On the other hand, his later material doesn't get better just because he's fond of it.

Now the rarities. These 1965-71 sessions overflow with demos – both as singer at piano and as full band – emerging from cupboards after more than a half-century. There's his first appearance on a record (Bluesology's *Come Back Baby*) and the first John/Taupin composition, *Scarecrow*. Tracks range from the cheesy try-hard to the effortlessly poignant. *If You Could See Me Now* and *And The Clock Goes Round* stand out. The piano demo of *Amoreena* has brittle charm. It's interesting, too, to hear the Pinner boy gradually adopting that American accent. With or without it, he was a grainy, fully committed singer.

Two discs of B-sides open with *Snow Queen*, a duet with Kiki Dee in which Taupin takes an ungallant dig at Cher. There are duets with France Gall, and the downright weird *Did Anybody Sleep With Joan Of Arc*. The theme of the final disc, titled *And This Is Me…*, seems vague, given that the whole caboodle is 'me', but it's never a chore to hear *Border Song* or *Philadelphia Freedom*.

Offering gems, misfires and revelations, *Elton: Jewel Box* is an absorbing opening of the vaults.

Chris Roberts

GETTY / DAVID GAHR / PRESS

Uriah Heep

50 Years In Rock BMG

Bumper box set celebrating a half-century of 'ard graft and 'umility.

Still marshalled by their ever-beaming guitarist Mick Box, for whom the worst possible crisis imaginable represents nothing more than an opportunity to contemplate, regroup and emerge to see another day, Uriah Heep are among the last breathing pioneers of hard rock and heavy metal. Led Zeppelin – gone; Black Sabbath and Budgie – also gone. However, along with Deep Purple and Judas Priest, Heep have actually used the past decade and a bit to engineer an unlikely renaissance.

In a career marked by few awards, 2008's *Wake The Sleeper* saw them hurdle the departure of long-time drummer Lee Kerslake and begin anew (once again) with a nomination for Album Of The Year at the Classic Rock Roll Of Honour. It lost out to Whitesnake's *Good To Be Bad*, but the public acknowledgement almost seemed to regenerate Heep, who rebuilt with a new record label and management and three further top-quality records: *Into The Wild*, the appropriately titled *Outsider* and, even more so, *Living The Dream*.

Fifty years after their impossible to ignore debut *…Very 'Eavy …Very 'Umble*, Uriah Heep are still in the game, and but for covid-19 would have celebrated this fact with a world tour that included a prestigious home-town date at the London Palladium.

The 24-disc *50 Years In Rock* (available at Amazon for £137.99) sets itself up as the all-singing, all-dancing documentation of Heep's adventures. Considering the numerous labels through which the band have released music over the years, its compilers deserve kudos for uniting all 24 of their studio records, plus their David Byron-fronted *Live 1973*, an all-time great example of the double-gatefold concert set format.

Presented in a heavy-duty album-shaped box, it includes a vinyl edition of 1972's *The Magician's Birthday* featuring reimagined Roger Dean artwork, a softback 64-page book containing new comments by its four curators – Box, keyboard player/guitarist Ken Hensley, bassist Paul Newton and the recently deceased Kerslake (mistakenly described as surviving "original" members) – plus adverts for albums and gigs, tour programmes and some press cuttings.

What it doesn't offer is anything that could be considered 'new', except for four discs, effectively 'playlists', curated by Box, Hensley and co. Given the amount of unheard material gathering dust in the vaults, this is tantamount to unforgivable and is a real missed opportunity.

The music ■■■■■■■■□□

The packaging ■■■■■□□□□□

Dave Ling

Geezer Butler

Reissues BMG

Sabbath's bassist's extra-curricular albums.

Easily forgotten amid the emotional squall of Black Sabbath's slow-motion demise, Geezer Butler's three solo albums have all stood the test of time remarkably well.

1995's *Plastic Planet* is an underrated gem. A noble and largely successful attempt to embrace modern notions of heaviness, songs like *Drive Boy, Shooting* and *Give Up The Ghost* (apparently a dig at Tony Iommi) were bolstered by the primal roar and treacly croon of Fear Factory singer Burton C Bell.

Two years later, *Black Science* noisily upheld the same formula while introducing versatile and quite possibly unhinged new vocalist Clark Brown, scoring maximum nerd points via songs about *Doctor Who* (*Among The Cybermen*) and, you know, aliens and that (*Area Code 51*). For fans of muscular, so-called alternative metal, both records are worth a second look.

As Brown returned for 2005's *Ohmwork*, Butler's songwriting was cheerfully all over the place. Ignoring the cack-handed nu metal of *Prisoner 103* and several blatant nods to Korn, it was a warped and schizophrenic plunge into all manner of gnarly metal and spiky noise, with the woozy but wild *Aural Sects* and the ornate (if unforgivably titled) psycho-core of *Dogs Of Whore* the classiest cuts.

All ■■■■■■■□□□

Dom Lawson

Crass

Crassical Collection

ONE LITTLE INDIAN

Hard to put a numerical value on this music.

Fierce anti-establishment anarcho-punk art collective Crass were equally about the politics as about the music: impossible to separate, right from the didactic two-chord thrash and yell of their debut 18-track 12-inch *Feeding Of The 5000* (1978) and debut (double) album *Stations Of The Crass* (1979), through to the stunningly righteous feminist statement *Penis Envy* (1981) and deliberately 'blasphemous' follow-up *Christ – The Album* (1982) and the final brace of long-players *Yes Sir, I Will* (1983) and *Ten Notes On A Summer's Day* (1986). The direct action never wavered, the controversy and attempted censorship (retaliation from the establishment) never ceased, the subversion of sniping continued.

Even these reissues – the entire recorded works, plus bonus remastered studio and live tracks – are shrouded in controversy: three former band members threatening legal action when they were first reissued in 2010. 'Thatchergate', *Sheep Farming In The Falklands*, anti-consumerist graffiti, tabloid 'exposés'… all are contained within, along with some of the most brutal, brilliant punk music ever committed to vinyl and CD.

The anti-violence 1980 single *Bloody Revolutions* alone shames a generation of pallid fly-by-night copyists, while the first two albums and *Penis Envy* remain untouched as pinnacles of rage and power and, oddly, sensitivity among the furore and fury.

Totally recommended.

■■■■■■■■■□

Everett True

Trapeze

Reissues CHERRY RED

Trapeze's terrific triple whammy.

Most often remembered as the band that bassist/vocalist Glenn Hughes left to join Deep Purple, Trapeze had a short period in the early 70s during which, signed to the Moody Blues' Threshold record label, they looked like genuine contenders. Their self-titled debut album from 1970, featuring the original five-man line-up, is classic late-60s pop-rock just hinting at the harder-rocking trajectory they were destined to take. Disc two includes a demo of *Seafull*, a song destined for their next album, while the unreleased *Colour Me Pop* and BBC sessions are a bit of a whimsical psychedelic revelation.

Just six months down the line and trimmed down to the power trio of Hughes, guitarist Mel Galley and drummer Dave Holland, *Medusa* is definitive hard-rocking Trapeze, positively oozing soulful funky blues.

Their third album, 1972's *You Are The Music – We're Just The Band*, featuring a number of guest performers, is an exercise in sophistication and power.

The live material across discs two and three (which include a number of rarities) varies from

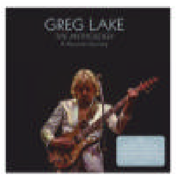
a ropy but fascinating 1973 Radio 1 *In Concert* 'off air' recording to two impressively loose and heavy US live sets.

Following Hughes's departure to join Deep Purple in '73 Trapeze continued, but they never quite manage to regain the same momentum.

Trapeze
Medusa
You Are…
Essi Berelian

Greg Lake
Anthology BMG

Career-spanning collection from the prog-rock icon, on CD and gatefold vinyl.



A talented producer, consummate bass player and gifted lyricist who sang lead vocals on both King Crimson's *21st Century Schizoid Man* and his cockle-warming Christmas hit *I Believe In Father Christmas*, Greg Lake was one of pop's great polymaths.

This 33-track collection provides the proof, ranging from his days with psych outfits The Shame (*Don't Go 'Way Little Girl*) and Shy Limbs (patchouli-scented 1969 B-side *Love*), via choice cuts from the ELP catalogue (*Take A Pebble, C'est La Vie, Lucky Man*), his solo career (*Haunted, Slave To Love*) and an unreleased version of *Closer To Believing* recorded on his final tour in 2012.

While it only scratches the surface of his talents, it's a reminder of a pioneering musical odyssey cut short by his premature death in 2016. The collection is made more satisfying by an extended essay by Chris Welch, previously unseen photos, and the full support of former manager Stewart Young and Regina, Lake's wife of 40 years.

A great Yuletide distraction for fans, especially if it does just keep on raining.

Paul Moody

The Pogues
The BBC Sessions 1984-1986 RHINO

Warning: may contain alcohol.

That Shane MacGowan still walks among us is a minor miracle. Few have drunk as much as the perpetually legless Pogues frontman and remained breathing, let alone upright. But the liquid muse that gave him his inspiration ultimately proved to be his creative downfall.

This 23-track compilation, taken from a series of sessions they recorded for the Beeb over the space of two and a half years, captures North London's finest a few years before the booze started to addle their singer's genius. *Streams Of Whiskey, The Boys From The County Hell* and *Billy's Bones* are rough-arsed and wild, but it's the solemn and stately *Navigator*, their version of Behan's *The Auld Triangle* and the unbearably moving *The Old Main Drag* that truly capture the band's greatness, even in these unvarnished incarnations.

There's a little overlap with 2008's brilliant *Just Look Them Straight In The Eye And Say: Pogue Mahone!* box set, although slower – and inferior – versions of songs that would later turn up on 1988's career-capping *If I Should Fall From Grace With God* don't add anything to the myth. But a half-cut Pogues are still way better than most other bands stone-cold sober.

Dave Everley

Various
Make More Noise! Women In Independent Music UK 1977-1987 CHERRY RED

Hard to find fault with this.

What might have been a tokenistic representation of an entire gender in other, more careless hands is rendered magnificent through the amount of effort and detail put into its conception. First, it does what it says on the tin: a four-CD, 90-track collection from women involved in making independent music in the between 1977 and 1987 (broadly, but not entirely, post-punk, then).

The range and depth it covers is staggering: from the confrontational stylings of X-Ray Spex's Poly Styrene on the compilation's opening track *Oh Bondage, Up Yours* ('*Some people think little girls should be seen and not heard*,' she spits sarcastically, opening the floodgates to a welter of creativity), through Lene Lovich's otherworldly *Lucky Number* and then on to far more esoteric and independent offerings. These include jazz-punk pioneers Rip Rig And Panic, early punk trailblazers Poison Girls and Androids Of Mu, The Chef's brilliant disarming yet political pop song *Food*, Vivien Goldman's timeless dub *Private Armies*, The Raincoats and The Slits of course, Girls At Our Best! and Talulah Gosh, Nico, Girlschool, Au Pairs' righteous invective, the pure pop fuzz of Shop Assistants, Dolly Mixture… far too many to list here.

Nearly every track is a gem, and there's so much to discover; representation of disparate forms of music that often got cruelly (and unfairly) overlooked because of its creators' gender. Match this to some excellent sleeve notes from *She-Bop* author Lucy O'Brien and details of every song included, and you have what is without doubt one of the compilations of this, or any other, year.

Everett True

Kerbdog
Reissues HASSLE HINDSIGHT

Welcome return of two of the great lost albums of the 90s.

As this year has, sadly, demonstrated to an excessive extent, the music industry is littered with bands that had the talent, the drive and the tunes to have been huge, but circumstances cruelly whipped opportunity from them.

Kerbdog, formed in smalltown Ireland in the early 90s, are one of those bands. With the rumbling, metallic chug of Helmet, the artful inventiveness of Jawbox, the deft melodicism of Hüsker Dü and a charm and style all of their own, they were clearly on to something special from day one with 1994's earth-quaking, feedback-slathered *Kerbdog* (**7/10**). A supremely confident debut, seething with urgency, it stands as a superior grunge-era album on its own terms.

But the best was to come with 1997's magnificent masterpiece *On The Turn* (**8/10**). Opener *Sally* glories in a clear-eyed rock melody that Foo Fighters or Biffy Clyro would give their right arm for, taut riffs, frontman Cormac Battle's emotional but fearless vocals are burnished by a spectacular production from knob-twiddler extraordinaire Garth Richardson, and the thrills just keep building from there. Artistic and accessible, heavy and subtle in equal measure, it still sounds as fresh as the day it was first released.

Both reissues are remastered and pressed on coloured vinyl, and we'd all be fools to let them slip away for a second time.

Emma Johnston

BEST OF THE REST
Other reissues out this month.

David Bowie
Metrobolist WARNER

Tony Visconti's 2020 remix of Bowie's first Mick Ronson collaboration *The Man Who Sold The World* is neither sacrilege nor revelation. Technically superior, but really, why mess with magic? **8/10**

Various
Bubblerock Is Here To Stay! GRAPEFRUIT

Glam-rock teens were weaned on the turn-of-the-70s pop-shlock collected on these three lovingly curated discs. Often wincingly terrible, but nostalgia knows no logic. An unedifying joy. **7/10**

Style Council
Long Hot Summers: The Story Of The Style Council POLYDOR/UMC

Growing up mod, with dreams of cool jazz and Paris café culture, Paul Weller (blessed with a vast, Jam-earned budget) couldn't resist the Style Council's ambitious indulgence. Neatly anthologised, but hardly All Mod Cons. **7/10**

Pretty Things
Parachute (50th Anniversary) MADFISH

Often overshadowed by *SF Sorrow*, its strong, richly harmonic, conceptual 1970 successor (now neatly expanded) finds bassist Wally Allen stepping up creatively for the absent Dick Taylor. **8/10**

Oasis
(What's The Story) Morning Glory? BIG BROTHER

Just as there are many who swear by *Roll With It, Champagne Supernova* and *Wonderwall*, there are just as many who only swear at them. Even when pressed into 25th-anniversary coloured double vinyl. **8/10**

Aerosmith
Rocks Donnington EAGLE ROCK

An in-form 'Smiths deliver a storming ,hits-heavy set on three vinyls. Attractively ragged in places, though slick when it counts. The enduring emotive power of Steven Tyler's voice often beggars belief. **7/10**

Whitesnake
Love Songs RHINO

Fifteen of silver-tongued, golden-voiced Lothario David Coverdale's most efficacious, time-honoured knicker-strippers remixed, remastered (retooled, if you will) to a dazzling sheen of seductive irresistibility. **7/10**

Lemonheads
Lovey FIRE

Thirtieth-anniversary expansion (with the addition of a suitably haphazard '91 live set) for the preppy-slack Boston punk-poppers' major-label debut. Edgy sensitivity that leaves little impression. **6/10**

Ian Dury
Hit Me! The Best Of Ian Dury BMG

No stranger to repackaging, Lord Upminster's evergreen catalogue of genre-fluid Essex erudition gets a further festive punt punterwards, this time as a cannily collated three-CD set. Essential. Again. **9/10**

Various
Eddie Piller Presents The Mod Revival DEMON

From Jam to OCS, Accidents to Corduroy, the *Quadrophenia*-ignited, punk-informed mod revival was a broad, inclusive church indeed, as Modcaster Piller demonstrates brilliantly across this sharply packaged four-disc précis. **8/10**

Elvis Costello
Complete Armed Forces UME

Nine vinyls (original album, copious live sets, *Sketches For Emotional Fascism* out-takes, singles) and 10,000 words of liner notes from the man himself. The last word on Elvis's third and arguably best album. **9/10**

Steve Miller Blues Band
Live From The Fillmore West 1968 RETROWORLD

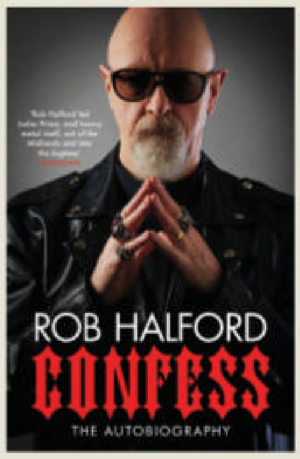
Drawing on material from both *Children Of The Future* and *Sailor*, this gritty slice of high-energy psych-blues features three numbers with Paul Butterfield, but Miller's guitar invariably retains the spotlight. **7/10**

Confess: The Autobiography

Rob Halford With Ian Gittins HEADLINE

50 Years Of Metal

Judas Priest RUFUS



Salacious revelations and career-spanning photos from the Midlands metal gods.

The most hotly anticipated hard-rock autobiography of the year, Rob Halford's *Confess* (**8/10**) is gossipy, good natured and hilarious, often unintentionally. It's also gloriously and relentlessly filthy. "The cock has no conscience," the Judas Priest singer quips. "Or at least mine has never had one."

With a breezy, earthy, down-to-earth frankness that is pure West Midlands, 69-year-old Halford retraces his eventful journey from Walsall council-estate outsider to self-styled "metal god". Along the way *Confess* covers the recording of classic albums like Judas Priest's *British Steel* and *Painkiller*, booze and drug addiction, rehab and recovery, the infamous *Stained Class* suicide lawsuit, Halford's sabbatical from Priest in the 90s, and their subsequent ongoing reunion. The band should have been on their fiftieth anniversary tour right now, but covid-19 has put celebrations on hold.

Confess is much more personal story than music memoir. After decades in the closet, Halford finally outed himself as gay in 1998. Which surprised nobody who grew up watching him scream innuendo-laden songs like *Hell Bent For Leather* in full Village People gear, but he still feared his sexuality would alienate the band's more conservative fan base. Thankfully his public confession did no discernible damage to Priest's popularity.

With chapter titles such as The Shirley Bassey Leather Years and Mine Eyes Have Seen The Glory Hole, this is not a book for anyone squeamish about heavy rock's screamingly camp subtext. Halford claims he already knew he was homosexual as a 10-year-old schoolboy, but insists "me and my mates wanking each other off wasn't a gay thing… we were just giving each other a hand." But like many young gay men in the 60s and 70s, especially those growing up outside big cities, his tortuous early love life was full of loneliness, frustration and danger.

Even as Judas Priest achieved global fame, Halford's anguished sex life mostly involved hit-and-miss cruising missions and anonymous toilet hook-ups. One resulted in an arrest that, to his relief, the LAPD agreed to keep quiet. In desperation, he began to signal his sexuality from the stage using the 'hanky'

GETTY/PRESS

code, "telling the cognoscenti that I was bang-up for a bit of water sports or fisting". He also took pride in "smuggling" graphic sex lyrics on to Priest records. *Jawbreaker*, for example, "was a song about a giant cock". Alas it seems nobody picked up on these subtle *Lick My Love Pump* hints.

Halford finally met a serious boyfriend, Brad. "We were doing each other in the bog within ten minutes," he reports. Ah, young love. Sadly their relationship descended into a violent cocaine and alcohol frenzy, culminating in Halford checking into rehab and Brad committing suicide. After further wrong turns, happily he settled down into domestic bliss with his current long-term partner, Thomas.

Confess is full of charmingly blatant fanboy name-dropping. Alongside the usual suspects like Ozzy, Lemmy and Jimmy Page, more exotic creatures including Quentin Crisp, Andy Warhol, Jack Nicholson and Lady Gaga also have colourful cameos. "Bloody hell, Rob!" Halford muses after one starry backstage encounter. "You only met Madonna two minutes ago, and you've already nearly got your cock in her gob!" At a Buckingham Palace party, he is equally awed by the Queen and Cilla Black – "one of life's natural fag-hags".

While in the book Halford is winningly unpretentious and self-deprecating, there's little in the way of deep analysis or sharp-witted insight. Besides a few lyrical snippets there's disappointingly little discussion of Priest's music, the chemistry between band members or their wider place in rock history. His "retirement" from Priest in 1992 to work on various side projects is presented, somewhat disingenuously, as an innocent cluster-fuck of farcical misunderstandings. Guitarist KK Downing's acrimonious departure in 2011 is also glossed over in a few opaque lines.

In its final stretches, *Confess* becomes a moving meditation on family, friendship, personal growth and social progress. LGBT rockers can be more honest about their sexuality nowadays, Halford concludes, sounding bittersweet but optimistic. He ends by paying fond tribute to working-class Walsall, where he still owns a house, and where he dreams one day of having his own statue erected – complete with dry ice and lasers. "That doesn't seem too much to ask," he quips, camp showman to the end.

Serving as visual companion piece to *Confess*, the officially approved deluxe coffee-table volume *Judas Priest – 50 Years Of Metal* (**6/10**) charts the band's career through photos, sleeve artwork and tour posters. Mostly comprised of live shots by the legendary rock snapper Ross Halfin, this pricey 640-page souvenir is for hard-core Priest devotees only. But with the band having maintained a pretty conservative no-frills metal aesthetic rather than creating a distinct visual identity with arty photographers and designers, these endless guitar-hero montages soon become repetitive.

'Gossipy, good natured and hilarious, often unintentionally.'

For casual fans the main interest will be the early, unguarded backstage snapshots, plus the evolution of Halford's look from shaggy-maned glam poodle to whip-cracking Depeche Mode leather-gimp to brawny, bearded, balding sex walrus.

Judas Priest – 50 Years Of Metal is a mildly diverting catalogue of heavy metal pageantry, but *Confess* is a much more revealing and entertaining book.

Stephen Dalton

So Much For The 30-Year Plan

Simon Young JAWBONE

The authorised Therapy? biography.

It's been a long, hard slog for Therapy?. That they've lasted so long is laudable enough, but that they've done it while constantly evolving is more remarkable still.

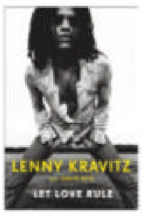
With a chapter for each year, Simon Young tells their story in exemplary fashion, supportive but far from hagiography. Along the way we learn just how many Therapy? songs were inspired by great literature (*Tides* by Samuel Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape*, for example); how Andy Cairns's bacchanalian lifestyle almost derailed them; how a night at Timothy Leary's place with Billy Idol and House Of Pain wasn't that much fun. Weirdly, though, for something so unblinking, the curtains are drawn on anything outside the band, so when Mrs Cairns first appears, on page 100, it's a shock, since their courtship hadn't been mentioned. Likewise when Jose Mourinho sends apparently devout Chelsea fan Andy a letter wishing him happy birthday, since football hadn't been mentioned either. Most peculiar.

John Aizlewood

Let Love Rule

Lenny Kravitz with David Ritz SPHERE BOOKS

Rock'n'soul survivor's pre-fame memoir.



Right from when he emerged in the late 80s there was something about Lenny Kravitz that some rock fans didn't trust. He just seemed a little too designer-perfect and aftershave advert-ready when you had Guns'N'Roses shambling around. But as this account of his early life recounts, despite attending Beverly Hills High School and having an actress and a music promoter for parents, like any mixed-race kid he hardly had it easy.

Let Love Rule also illustrates how he grew up with the kind of contrasting musical and cultural influences that would inform a long career blending rock, soul and funk with a catwalk-friendly peacock strut. The conflicted feelings about his stern Jewish father are there for all to see, but so is the sheer revelatory joy of seeing the Jackson 5 as a kid. You might not buy into his LA-ish brand of spiritualism (the book begins with a dream that he now believes was God speaking to him) but as a coming-of-age tale it's illuminating stuff.

Johnny Sharp

Do You Feel Like I Do?

Peter Frampton with Alan Light HATCHETTE

A rollickingly fun read.

It's easy to see Peter Frampton as that bloke who was massive in the 70s, and that's all. But his memoir adds substance to that bare fact. And he does it in such a relaxed manner that you cannot help but like him.

Of course, there's loads of name dropping and tales about the high life. But Frampton unflinchingly takes the reader behind the scenes, strips away the veneer of stardom and is able to give insight into what it's been like to be this kid from South London who became a rock giant.

There's loads of humour, as well as naivete, plus tales of encounters with the Mafia and also President of the United States Gerald Ford. You're left with the feeling that Frampton cannot believe the bonkers journey life has taken him on.

An articulate autobiography from someone obviously in love with music.

Malcolm Dome

Roger Waters

Us + Them

SONY MUSIC ENTERTAINMENT

An audio-visual spectacular.

From May 2017 to December 2018, Roger Waters's huge-grossing Us + Them tour was a remarkable reassertion of one man's renaissance. This film, taken from the June 2018 Amsterdam Ziggo Dome shows, shows why.

It finds Waters at his most overpowering, a rock god in his pomp. As a result, the stage set is extraordinarily lavish (pigs do fly, of course), the band are drilled to perfection and the set-list is crowd pleasingly Pink Floyd-heavy. Yet the venom that has always fuelled him remains undrained, and without David Gilmour's soothing vocals, Waters's anger takes on a new, intimate, in-your-face dimension in *Wish You Were Here* and *Us And Them*, making the film aurally as well as visually spectacular.

John Aizlewood

THE HARD STUFF

STUFF

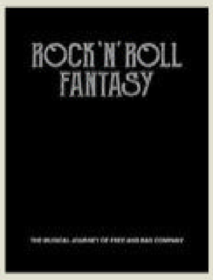
BOOKS & DVDs

Paul Rodgers: part of the chemistry that made Free special.

Rock 'N' Roll Fantasy:

The Musical Journey Of Free And Bad Company

David Roberts *THIS DAY IN MUSIC*



Fascinating oral history of Brit-rock legends.

"The only band I know to go on without thinking they're superstars," Ritchie Blackmore recalls in this glossy 400-page homage to all things Free-related.

His statement goes a long way to explaining the outpouring of affection the book includes, with starry-eyed gig-goers, long-term associates and an eclectic celebrity fan club (Joe Elliott, Slash, Bob Mortimer, Paddy McAloon) all lining up to sing the praises of both Free and Bad Company in paragraph-sized reminiscences. That's made all the more remarkable when you consider that Free's first two albums didn't even chart.

Rock 'N' Roll Fantasy lives up to its name by chronologically tracing the band's circuitous path from the days when they were wide-eyed teenagers. "I used to sit in class and watch the smoke billowing out of the steel works… that was my future," Paul Rodgers recalls of his school days in Middlesbrough, never imagining the glittering future which lay ahead of him. In doing so, it brings their story to life via an endless supply of quirky details provided by both acquaintances and the band members themselves. So we learn that Paul Kossoff did a mean Ena Sharples impression to defuse simmering inter-band tensions, Andy Fraser turned down an offer to join The Faces for the sake of his liver ("I knew I couldn't handle the drink"), and, later, Rodgers and Jimmy Page rarely saw eye to eye in The Firm.

Inevitably it's the first half of the book, covering the rise and demise of Free, that is the most compelling. Fraser (who sadly died in 2015) is quoted recalling the band's first rehearsal, at the Nag's Head in Battersea ("It was instant magic"), while we discover that Island Records boss Chris Blackwell almost lost out on signing them to due to his insistence that they change their name to the Heavy Metal Kids.

While Paul Kossoff's tragic death at just 25 is handled sensitively, it's the Free members' combustible chemistry that intrigues, with the global success of *All Right Now* only accelerating their break-up ("It became a bit of an albatross around our necks," says Simon Kirke).

"When Free broke up, we felt a sense of loss," recalls Brian May, who eventually found himself living out his own rock'n'roll fantasy when Rodgers became the vocalist with Queen.

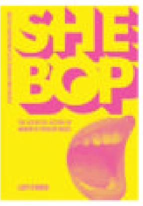
All in all, the book is a worthy companion piece to David Clayton's definitive Free biography *Heavy Load*.

Paul Moody

Lucy O'Brien

She-Bop: The Definitive History Of Women In Popular Music *JAWBONE*

A book that lives up to its bold-claim title.



The history of women in rock and other forms of music has often been a sidebar to the allegedly more exciting world of men in rock (now there's a book that would be made almost entirely of sweat), and when dealt with in detail has often been confined to specialist areas like jazz and blues. That's not the case with *She-Bop*. The '*Definitive History*' subtitle of this volume would be quite a claim were this the work of a lesser writer, but Lucy O'Brien's book (updated for its twenty-fifth anniversary) lives up to it – and then some.

Its interviewees alone – all 250 of them, from Chrissie Hynde to Dusty Springfield, from blues singers to Riot Grrls – would make it a labour of brilliance, but it's O'Brien's ability to sift through the tragedy, the misogyny and the grimness of the music industry's treatment of female talent, and her clear-eyed conclusions, that make it a classic. She may quote Suzanne Vega – "Female artists are rarely encouraged to pursue greatness" – but O'Brien explains, brilliantly, how women have "learned to use music to describe, define, and give meaning to their life", and in nearly 500 well-researched and superbly argued pages she details exactly how that has happened, from the blues brilliance of Bessie Smith and the very different Billie Holiday to modern artists like Lizzo and Lana Del Rey.

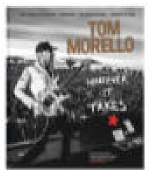
An essential music book for anyone who can read or think.

David Quantick

Tom Morello

Whatever It Takes *GENESIS*

A visual history of America's most outspoken guitarist.



Much more than just a scrapbook of a long and varied musical career, this weighty, glossy photographic autobiography serves to chart the making of a true American revolutionary. Raiding the archives, Morello introduces himself as an outrageously adorable child, and takes you through his awkward, spandex-clad teenage years – of which he writes with endearing self-deprecation – to the force of nature we've known since Rage Against The Machine turned the rock scene on its head in the 90s.

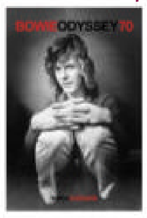
Some of these images are seared into history – Rage naked on stage at Lollapalooza, protesting the puritan PMRC, or dressed as hooded Guantanamo prisoners – but it's the ones that are less familiar that round out a portrait of a man who genuinely wants to make the world a better place. We see him on the streets, rallying for justice (often with his mother), and playing in prisons to help rehabilitate inmates through music. We see loving shots of battered guitars. We see him having an absolute blast on stage with Springsteen, and Chris Cornell. A sense of fun shines through, making the clear-eyed seriousness of his political beliefs all the more powerful. Pick up a copy and be inspired.

Emma Johnston

Bowie Odyssey 70

Simon Goddard *OMNIBUS*

Bowieology is brought to life in brilliant inspection of one year.



Just when you thought there were too many Bowie books and nothing new to say about him, this tremendously imaginative, truly riveting read finds a way to zoom in and extrapolate out. As gripping as fiction, it occurs entirely as the decade turns, focusing on the young Bowie who worries that *Space Oddity* has left him a one-hit-wonder, washed up and somewhat slightly dazed. He needs a band, a change of manager, to make choices regarding his family and love life, and to work out whether he's friends with Marc Bolan. He also needs to decide who he is: an issue which, perhaps happily, he never definitively resolved.

The sense of time and place is tactile, as all those factoids you know about Bowie's life are probed, questioned, fleshed out, moment by moment. Groovy Portobello couple Bolan and June Child visit David, awkwardly, at (Bowie's soon to be ex-manager) Kenneth Pitt's: "It's not that David dislikes Ken. He might even love him as a cat loves the sound of an opening fridge". We're taken into Haddon Hall and Trident Studios; Britain

KEVIN NIXON

is cold, with power cuts. Bowie keeps dreaming: subsequent volumes will continue the tale year by year. God knows, this is good.

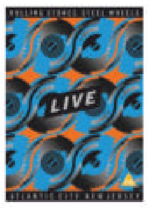
Chris Roberts

The Rolling Stones

Steel Wheels Live – Atlantic City, New Jersey

EAGLE ROCK

1989 TV special, restored and expanded.



After Jagger-Richards ceased "world war three" solo hostilities, the Stones followed 1989's *Steel Wheels* comeback album with the colossal tour that redefined modern touring and stadium spectacle, grossing a record-breaking hundred million dollars.

The post-apocalyptic *Blade Runner*-inspired stage set was eight storeys high, its smoking pipes, girders and ramps harbouring video screens, pyro and inflatable hookers. With the Stones augmented by horns, keyboard players and backing singers, the career-straddling 180 minutes kick-started the Keith-described "second half" that continues today.

This writer witnessed the televised final night, in Atlantic City, including guest spots from John Lee Hooker and Eric Clapton, plus awkward-looking Axl Rose and Izzy Stradlin joining *Salt Of The Earth*. If the stage's stunning impact proves difficult to capture, it's well-served by the Tokyo Dome set revisited in the box set, joined by a disc of lesser-performed tracks.

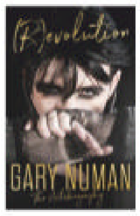
Still magnificently over-the-top.

Kris Needs

Gary Numan

(R)Evolution CONSTABLE

The robot-turned-flesh recounts his rise, fall and rise again.



Four decades ago, as *Are 'Friends' Electric?* and then *Cars* – both phenomenal records – introduced a chilly, apparently unfeeling android of pop, we all believed Numan was distant, scary and scared. In 2020 he's one of the most candid, funny, chatty guys in the game. And while a delight to talk to, he – importantly – knows that on stage you throw those big, starry, spectacular Messiah poses like there's no tomorrow.

Complex? He sure is. The honest, vulnerable version seems to have written this autobiography, although the one who retains mystique has tapped him on the shoulder now and again and said: "Easy, tiger." So it's almost as confessional as you'd expect. Which is pretty darn confessional.

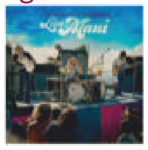
From supportive family to 21-year-old star with no guidance as to how to handle it, and as-yet-undiagnosed Asperger's syndrome, his youth was dizzying. At 25 he thought it was all over: he was mocked, in debt, depressed. He married his biggest fan and his luck changed. Trent Reznor championed him, and by 2017 he had a No.2 album again. He's rightly proud of clawing his way back. There's also much on his adventures with aeroplanes, and his kids. The lovable alien.

Chris Roberts

Music, Money, Madness: Jimi Hendrix Live In Maui

EXPERIENCE HENDRIX/LEGACY

You'll never hear surf music again.



Going on this film, exploring 1971's *Rainbow Bridge* movie, perhaps the greatest service his manager Mike Jeffrey performed for Hendrix was extracting $450,000 from Warner Bros to make a surfing *Easy Rider*, promising that Jimi would compose its soundtrack, allowing construction to continue on Electric Lady studios. It gave fans a priceless document of Jimi on blazing form in July 1970, weeks before his death, even though only 17 minutes survived from two sets he played in a dormant volcano on the Hawaiian island of Maui.

The original movie's Warhol-inspired lineage is explored before this film's fascinating account of Hendrix's Maui experience, with bassist Billy Cox revisiting the site, and interviews including Mitch Mitchell, Eddie Kramer, original director Chuck Wein, muse Melinda Merryweather, cast, crew and Warners execs.

Spruced by Kramer, Jimi's much-bootlegged appearance still provides teasingly short clips. Now it's an album, maybe that long-desired full concert film is next?

Kris Needs

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Tour Dates

2000 TREES FESTIVAL
JIMMY EAT WORLD, THRICE, CREEPER, MORE

Cheltenham	Upcote Farm	Jul 8-10

AEROSMITH, RIVAL SONS

London	O2 Arena	Jun 23
Manchester	Arena	Jun 29

THE ALLMAN BETTS BAND

Cardiff	Globe	May 7
London	Highbury Garage	May 8
Manchester	Academy	May 9
Glasgow	St Luke's Church	May 11

ARCTANGENT FESTIVAL
OPETH, CULT OF LUNA, SWANS, MORE

Bristol	Fernhill Farm	Aug 19-21

BAD TOUCH, PISTON

Norwich	Waterfront Studio	Apr 7
Newcastle	The Cluny	Apr 8
Glasgow	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	Apr 9
Dundee	Beat Generator	Apr 10
Manchester	Bread Shed	Apr 12
Leeds	Key Club	Apr 13
London	Islington Academy 2	Apr 14
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Apr 15
Nottingham	Bodega	Apr 16
Gravesend	Red Lion	Apr 17
Southampton	Joiners Arms	Apr 18
Cardiff	Clwb Ifor Bach	Apr 19
Newport	The Patriot	Apr 20
Exeter	The Tavern	Apr 21
Buckley	Tivoli	Apr 23

MARTIN BARRE BAND

Wakefield	Warehouse 23	May 29
Durham	Northern Kin Festival	May 30
York	The Crescent	Jun 3
Carlisle	Old Fire Station	Jun 5
Bilston	Robin 2	Jun 6
Hull	O'Rileys	Jun 11
Crickhowell	Clarence Hall	Jun 11

BAUHAUS

London	Alexandra Palace	Jun 3

JEFF BECK

Sheffield	City Hall	Apr 21
York	Barbican	Apr 22
Manchester	Apollo	Apr 23
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Apr 25
Gateshead	The Sage	Apr 26
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Apr 27
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Apr 30
London	Royal Albert Hall	May 1, 2

BIFFY CLYRO

Liverpool	Mountford Hall	Apr 11
London	Kentish Town Forum	Apr 12
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Apr 13
Sheffield	Academy	Apr 15
Southampton	Guildhall	Apr 16
Bristol	Academy	Apr 17

BLACK DEER FESTIVAL
SAVING GRACE FEATURING ROBERT PLANT & SUZI DIAN, WILKO, THE WATERBOYS, MORE

Kent	Eridge Park	Jun 18-20

BLACK FOXXES

Exeter	Cavern	Mar 2
Cardiff	Clwb Ifor Bach	Mar 3
Sheffield	Academy 2	Mar 4
Liverpool	Arts Club	Mar 6
Edinburgh	Mash House	Mar 7
York	Fulford Arms	Mar 8
Hull	Adelphi	Mar 9
Leicester	Academy 2	Mar 11
Cambridge	Portland Arms	Mar 12
St Albans	The Horn	Mar 14
Brighton	Hope & Ruin	Mar 15
London	Tufnell Park Boston Music Room	Mar 15
Tunbridge Wells	Forum	Mar 17

BLACKWATER CONSPIRACY, THESE WICKED RIVERS

Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Mar 13
Buckley	Tivoli	Apr 9
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Apr 17, 30
Cleethorpes	Rock Festival	Apr 18
Liverpool	Arts Club	Apr 21
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Apr 22
Glasgow	Hard Rock Café	Apr 23
Carlisle	Brickyard	Apr 24
Newcastle	Trillians	Apr 25
Stoke-On-Trent	Eleven	Apr 27
Birmingham	Academy 3	Apr 28
Oxford	Academy 2	Apr 29
Sheffield	Heretic Festival	May 1
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	May 2
Leicester	The Musician	May 4
London	Islington Academy 2	May 6
Newport	The Patriot	May 7
Gravesend	Red Lion	May 8

BLOODSTOCK FESTIVAL
JUDAS PRIEST, MERCYFUL FATE, DEVIN TOWNSHEND, MORE

Derbyshire	Catton Park	Aug 11-15

BONFIRE, BURNT OUT WRECK

London	Camden Underworld	Jan 22

BROKEN WITT REBELS

Leicester	Academy 2	Apr 1
Southampton	Joiners Arms	Apr 8
Tunbridge Wells	Forum	Apr 9
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Apr 10
Aberdeen	Tunnels	Apr 15
Edinburgh	Mash House	Apr 16
Buckley	Tivoli	Apr 17
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Apr 22
Brighton	Green Door Store	Apr 23
Nottingham	Bodega	Apr 30
Exeter	Cavern Club	May 5
Cardiff	Clwb Ifor Bach	May 6

Recommended

BROTHERS OSBORNE

Birmingham	Institute	May 10
Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	May 11
Cambridge	Junction	May 13
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	May 14
Leeds	Academy	May 16
Manchester	Albert Hall	May 17

TO BE RETAINED   ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

BUDE BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL (2021)
KEN PUSTELNIK'S GROUNDHOGS, STEPHEN DALE PETIT, XANDER & THE PEACE PIRATES, MORE

Bude	Penstowe Manor	Nov 5-7

NICK CAVE & THE BAD SEEDS

London	O2 Arena	April 15, 16
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Apr 16
Glasgow	The Hydro	April 20
Manchester	Arena	Apr 21
Dublin	3 Arena	Apr 23, 24
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Apr 26

CHEAP TRICK

Bristol	Academy	Apr 9
Manchester	Academy	Apr 10
Newcastle	Academy	Apr 12
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Apr 14
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Apr 15

CHELSEA BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL
CHRIS FARLOWE, CLIMAX BLUES BAND, MORE

London	Chelsea Under The Bridge	Mar 13

ERIC CLAPTON

London	Royal Albert Hall	May 14, 17, 18

CLEETHORPES BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL
THE ANIMALS & FRIENDS, THE BLOCKHEADS, MORE

Cleethorpes	Beachcomber	Mar 21

COUNTRY TO COUNTRY FESTIVAL
ERIC CHURCH, DARIUS RUCKER, LUKE COMBS, MORE

London	O2 Arena	Mar 12-14
Glasgow	The Hydro	Mar 12-14
Dublin	3 Arena	Mar 12-14

ROBERT CRAY BAND

Newcastle	City Hall	May 1
Edinburgh	Queens Hall	May 2
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	May 3
Leicester	De Montfort Hall	May 5
Buxton	Opera House	May 6
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	May 8
London	Cadogan Hall	May 19
Portsmouth	Guildhall	May 11
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	May 12
Basingstoke	The Anvil	May 14
Birmingham	Town Hall	May 15
Oxford	New Theatre	May 16

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

DOWNLOAD FESTIVAL

Kiss, Biffy Clyro (pictured) and System Of A Down headline the UK's biggest and loudest annual rock and metal knees-up.

Leicestershire	Donington Park	Jun 4-6

THE CRAZY WORLD OF ARTHUR BROWN

Sale	Waterside Arts	May 27
Whitley Bay	Playhouse	May 28
Swindon	Wyvern Theatre	Jun 3
London	Shepherd's Bush Bush Hall	Jun 4
Leeds	City Varieties	Jun 10
Lowestoft	Marina Theatre	Jun 11
Tewkesbury	Roses Theatre	Jun 12

CROPREDY FESTIVAL
STEVE HACKETT, TREVOR HORN, MORE

Oxfordshire	Cropredy Village	Aug 12-14

CROW BLACK CHICKEN

Minehead	Giants Of Rock Festival	Jan 23
Kinross	Green Hotel	Jan 27
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Jan 28
Hartlepool	United FC	Jan 30
Sheffield	HRH Blues Festival	Apr 11

DIAMOND HEAD, ROCK GODDESS

Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Apr 22
Bournemouth	Madding Crowd	Apr 23
Chester	Live Rooms	Apr 24
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Apr 25
Cambridge	Junction	Apr 27
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Apr 28
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Apr 30
Newcastle	The Cluny	May 5
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	May 6
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	May 7
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	May 8

REBECCA DOWNES, MOJO PREACHERS

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	May 25

DOWNLOAD FESTIVAL
KISS, BIFFY CLYRO, SYSTEM OF A DOWN, MORE

Leicestershire	Donington Park	Jun 4-6

DRIVE-BY TRUCKERS, JERRY JOSEPH

Leeds	Stylus	May 29
Dublin	Vicar Street	May 30
Glasgow	SWG3 Studio	Jun 1
London	Kentish Town Forum	Jun 2
Brighton	Chalk	Jun 3

ENSLAVED, INTRONAUT, OBSIDIAN KINGDOM, CROWN

Birmingham	Institute 2	May 12
Glasgow	Slay	May 13
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	May 14
London	Gt Portland Street 229 Club	May 15

EPICA, APOCALYPTICA, WHEEL

Nottingham	Rock City	Apr 16
Glasgow	Academy	Apr 17
Bristol	Academy	Apr 18
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Apr 27
Manchester	Academy	Apr 28

ESOTERICA

Bournemouth	The Anvil	Apr 1
Birmingham	Actress & Bishop	Apr 2
Manchester	Deaf Institute	Apr 3
London	Camden Black Heart	Apr 9
London	Camden Underworld	Apr 10

EVANESCENCE, WITHIN TEMPTATION

Glasgow	The Hydro	Sep 30
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Oct 1
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Oct 3
London	O2 Arena	Oct 4

FAITH NO MORE

Manchester	Apollo	Jun 7, 8
Glasgow	Academy	Jun 9
Birmingham	Academy	Jun 11
London	Brixton Academy	Jun 12, 13

SAMANTHA FISH

Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	Mar 15
Newcastle	Wylam Brewery	Mar 16
Bath	Komedia	Mar 18
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Mar 19
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 20
Manchester	Academy	Mar 21

THE FLAMING LIPS

Galway	Big Top	Jul 17
Liverpool	Invisible Wind Factory	Jul 19
Aylesbury	Waterside Theatre	Jul 21
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Jul 25

FM

Hull	The Welly	Apr 2
Wakefield	Warehouse 23	Apr 3
Nantwich	Civic Hall	Apr 4
Nuneaton	Queens Hall	Apr 4
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Apr 10
Bournemouth	Madding Crowd	Apr 16
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Apr 17
Newcastle	University	Apr 23
Glasgow	Garage	Apr 24
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	May 1
Reading	Sub 89	May 2

FREEDOM CALL

London	Camden Underworld	Jan 23

FUTURAMA FEST
PETER HOOK, THEATRE OF HATE, CHAMELEONS, MORE

Liverpool	Various venues	Apr 3, 4

ERIC GALES, DANNY BRYANT

Brighton	Concorde 2	Feb 3
Dover	Booking Hall	Feb 4
London	Islington Academy	Feb 5
Southampton	1865	Feb 6
Bristol	Fleece & Firkin	Feb 7
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Feb 8
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Feb 10
Gateshead	The Sage	Feb 11
Glasgow	Oran Mor	Feb 12
Manchester	Academy 3	Feb 13
Bilston	Robin 2	Feb 14

GENESIS

Glasgow	The Hydro	Apr 1, 2
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Apr 5, 6, 7
Newcastle	Utilita Arena	Apr 9, 10
Manchester	Arena	Apr 12, 13
Dublin	3 Arena	Apr 15, 16
Belfast	SSE Arena	Apr 18

KEVIN NIXON

Leeds	First Direct Arena	Apr 21, 22
Liverpool	M&S Bank Arena	Apr 24, 25
London	O2 Arena	Apr 27, 29, 30

GREEN DAY

London	London Stadium	Jun 25
Huddersfield	John Smiths Stadium	Jun 26
Glasgow	Green	Jun 28
Dublin	RDS Arena	Jun 30

GUNS N' ROSES

London	Tottenham Hotspur Stadium	Jun 18, 19
Dublin	Marlay Park	Jun 22
Glasgow	Bellahouston Park	Jun 24

HAMMERFEST
LORDI, RAGING SPEEDHORN, VENOM INC, MORE

Birmingham	Academy	Feb 13, 14

HARD ROCK HELL NEW WAVE OF CLASSIC ROCK
MASSIVE WAGONS, BAD TOUCH, MASSIVE, MORE

Leicester	Academy	Jan 23, 24

HARD ROCK HELL PSYCH
ØRESUND SPACE COLLECTIVE, GORILLA, ELECTRIC MOON, MORE

Liverpool	Psych Club	Apr 17, 18

HERETIC FEST
INGLORIOUS, AARON BUCHANAN, RAVENEYE, MORE

Sheffield	Corporation	Apr 30-May 2

INGLORIOUS

Southampton	Engine Rooms	Apr 22
Swansea	Sin City	Apr 23
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Apr 24
Plymouth	Junction	Apr 25
Gloucester	Guildhall	Apr 27
Bristol	Thekla	Apr 28
Sheffield	Heretic Fest	Apr 30
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	May 1
Bradford	Nightrain	May 2
Glasgow	Cathouse	May 4
Newcastle	Riverside	May 5
Manchester	Academy	May 6
Buckley	Tivoli	May 7
Liverpool	Arts Loft	May 9
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	May 10
Newcastle	Rock City	May 11
Stoke-on-Trent	Sugarmill	May 12
Birmingham	The Asylum	May 14
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	May 15
Norwich	Waterfront	May 16
Brighton	Chalk	May 18
London	Malet Street ULU	May 19

WILKO JOHNSON

Portsmouth	New Theatre Royal	Feb 4
Swindon	Wyvern Theatre	Feb 5
Peterborough	Cresset Theatre	Feb 6
Glasgow	Saint Luke's Church	Feb 10
Whitley Bay	Playhouse	Feb 11
Manchester	RNCM	Feb 12
Birmingham	Town Hall	Feb 19
Nottingham	Albert Hall	Feb 20
Cheltenham	Town Hall	Feb 21
New Brighton	Floral Pavilion	Feb 25
Bury St Edmunds	Apex Arts Centre	Feb 26
Bexhill	De Le Warr Pavilion	Feb 27
Poole	Lighthouse	Feb 23
Worthing	Assembly Hall	Apr 24
Shrewsbury	Theatre Severn	Apr 29
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Apr 30

ROBERT JON & THE WRECK

Aberdeen	Drummonds	May 2
Edinburgh	Voodoo Rooms	May 4
Manchester	Night & Day Café	May 5
Nottingham	Bodega	May 6
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	May 7
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	May 10
Newcastle	The Cluny	May 11
Sittingbourne	Bourne Music Club	May 12

KINGDOM OF MADNESS FEATURING TONY MARTIN

Newcastle	The Cluny	Mar 10
Kinross	Green Hotel	Mar 11
Glasgow	Hard Rock Café	May 12
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	May 26
Havant	Spring Arts Centre	May 27
London	Chelsea Under The Bridge	Apr 1
Wavendon	The Stables	Apr 2
Maidenhead	Norden Farm Centre	Apr 3
Colchester	Arts Centre	Apr 4
Swindon	Level III	Apr 9
Buckley	Tivoli	Apr 10
Sheffield	Corporation	Apr 11
Leicester	Y Theatre	Apr 23
Sudbury	Quay Theatre	Apr 24
Wolverhampton	Newhampton Arts Centre	Apr 30
Bradford	Nightrain	May 1

KING KING, CATS IN SPACE, FIRED UP

Chepstow	Castle	May 1

JIM KIRKPATRICK

Crewe	The Raven	Nov 15

LARKIN POE

Dublin	Vicar Street	Feb 3
Glasgow	SWG3 Galvanizers	Feb 4
Birmingham	Institute	Feb 5
Brighton	Chalk	Feb 6
Bristol	SWX	Feb 8
Oxford	Academy	Feb 9
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Feb 10
Manchester	The Ritz	Feb 11

LAZULI

Cambridge	Portland Arms	Mar 1
Newcastle	Think Tank	Mar 2
Glasgow	Ivory Blacks	Mar 3
Liverpool	Cavern Club	Mar 4
Stourport	Fusion Festival	Mar 6
Southampton	1865	Mar 7
London	Gt Portland Street 229 Club	Jun 23

LONELY ROBOT

London	Islington Assembly Hall	Dec 13

LOOE BLUES FESTIVAL
THE ANIMALS, MARTIN TURNER, CHANTEL McGREGOR, MORE

Looe	Tencreek Holiday Park	Dec 11-13

MAN

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Mar 30
Derby	Flowerpot	Apr 1
Leamington Spa	Assembly	Oct 1

MANIC STREET PREACHERS

Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Jul 16, 17

MARILLION (2021)

Hull	City Hall	Nov 14
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Nov 15
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Nov 17
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Nov 18
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Nov 20
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Nov 21
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Nov 23
Bath	Forum	Nov 24
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Nov 26, 27

NICK MASON'S SAUCERFUL OF SECRETS

Leicester	De Montfort Hall	Apr 13
Guildford	G Live	Apr 14
Croydon	Fairfield Halls	Apr 16
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Apr 18
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Apr 19
Sheffield	City Hall	Apr 20
London	Royal Albert Hall	Apr 22
Plymouth	Pavilions	Apr 24
Brighton	Dome	Apr 26
Bath	Forum	Apr 27
Oxford	New Theatre	Apr 29
Ipswich	Regent Theatre	Apr 30
Cardiff	St David's Hall	May 1
Liverpool	Philharmonic	May 3
York	Barbican	May 4
Newcastle	City Hall	May 5
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	May 7
Manchester	Apollo	May 8
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	May 9

Recommended

MASSIVE WAGONS

Glasgow	Garage	Mar 11
Sheffield	Foundry	Mar 12
London	Islington Academy	Mar 13
Norwich	Waterfront	Mar 15
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Mar 16
Southend-on-Sea	Chinnerys	Mar 18
Birmingham	Academy 2	Mar 19
Liverpool	Hangar 34	Mar 20
Cardiff	The Globe	Mar 23
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Mar 24
Exeter	Cavern Club	Mar 25
Newcastle	Riverside	Mar 27
Manchester	Club Academy	Mar 28

MAYHEM, MORTIIS

Manchester	Academy 2	Mar 23
Belfast	Limelight	Mar 24
Dublin	Academy	Mar 25
Glasgow	Slay	Mar 26
Bristol	The Fleece	Mar 27
London	Islington Academy	Mar 28

CHANTEL McGREGOR

Worthing	The Factory	Dec 11
Chester	Live Rooms	Jan 22

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

LARKIN POE

Sisters Rebecca and Megan Lovell cook up tasty roots rock with a bluesy twang, southern spices and sweet harmonies.

See left for dates. Currently February 3 to 11.

JOBY SESSIONS

Nuneaton	Queens Hall	Jan 23
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Feb 5
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Feb 6
Hull	New Adelphi	Sep 17

PAT McMANUS BAND

Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Mar 5
Hitchin	Club 85	Mar 6
Sutton In Ashfield	The Diamond	Mar 7
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Mar 9
Bradford	Nightrain	Mar 10
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Mar 11
Buckley	Tivoli	Mar 12
Kinross	Green Hotel	Mar 13
Glasgow	Hard Rock Café	Mar 14
Bournemouth	Madding Crowd	Mar 18
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Mar 19
Cymmer	Rhondda Hotel	Mar 20

FANTASTIC NEGRITO

London	Camden Jazz Café	Mar 29

NHS THANKYOU CONCERT
THE WILDHEARTS, BIG COUNTRY, THE BREW, MORE

Cleethorpes	Meridian Park	Jul 31

NIGHTWISH, AMORPHIS, TURMION KÄTILÖT

Birmingham	Resorts World Arena	May 1
London	Wembley Arena	May 2

THE NIMMO BROTHERS

Clitheroe	The Grand	Jul 13
Newbury	Arlington Arts Centre	Jul 14
Wavendon	The Stables	Jul 15

OZZY OSBOURNE, JUDAS PRIEST (2022)

Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Feb 27
Dublin	3 Arena	Mar 1
Birmingham	Resorts World Arena	Mar 4
London	O2 Arena	Mar 7
Manchester	AO Arena	Mar 9
Newcastle	Utilita Arena	Mar 12
Glasgow	The Hydro	Mar 14

PARADISE LOST

Leeds	Warehouse	May 1

PEARL JAM

London	British Summer Time Festival	Jul 9, 10
London	Camden Underworld	Feb 28

STEPHEN DALE PETIT

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Mar 5

THE PSYCHEDELIC FURS, PAULINE MURRAY

London	Royal Albert Hall	Apr 27
Nottingham	Rock City	Apr 28
Bristol	Academy	Apr 29
Glasgow	Barrowland	May 1
Liverpool	Academy	May 2
Manchester	Academy 2	May 3
Cambridge	Junction	May 5

QUEEN + ADAM LAMBERT

London	O2 Arena	Jun 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 16, 17, 19, 20
Manchester	Arena	Jun 10, 11
Birmingham	Arena	Jun 13, 14

QUIREBOYS

Brighton	Concorde 2	Jan 28
Birmingham	Institute	Jan 29
Stoke-on-Trent	Sugarmill	Jan 30
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Feb 4
Glasgow	Garage	Feb 5
Aberdeen	Lemon Tree	Feb 6
Gloucester	Guildhall	Feb 11
Manchester	Club Academy	Feb 12
Gateshead	The Sage	Feb 13
Bristol	Thekla	Jun 4
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Jun 5
Oxford	The Bullingdon	Jun 18
Southend-on-Sea	Chinnerys	Jun 19
Maidstone	Ramblin' Man Fair	Jul 18
Ebbw Vale	Steelhouse Festival	Sep 23
London	Kentish Town Forum	Sep 3, 4
Dover	Booking Hall	Sep 5
Cambridge	Junction	Sep 16
Bilston	Robin 2	Sep 23
Chester	Live Rooms	Sep 25
Guildford	Boileroom	Oct 1
Belfast	Empire	Nov 12

RAMBLIN' MAN FAIR
CLUTCH, BIG BIG TRAIN, FOGHAT, MORE

Maidstone	Mote Park	Jul 16-18

RECKLESS LOVE, DAN REED NETWORK, MASON HILL

Southampton	Engine Rooms	Mar 1
Cardiff	Tramshed	Mar 2
Birmingham	The Mill	Mar 4
Liverpool	Grand Central Hall	Mar 5
Manchester	Academy 2	Mar 6
Glasgow	Garage	Mar 8
Leeds	Warehouse	Mar 9
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 10
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Mar 11

REDD KROSS

Brighton	The Albert	May 3
Bristol	The Exchange	May 4
Manchester	Deaf Institute	May 5
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	May 6
Glasgow	Broadcast	May 7
London	Islington The Lexington	May 9, 10

RHINO'S REVENGE

Barnoldswick	Music & Arts Centre	Jun 4
Kinross	Green Hotel	Jun 5
Chesterfield	Real Time Live	Jun 6
Winchester	The Railway	Jun 11
Horsham	REC Rooms	Jun 12

ROCK AND BLUES CUSTOM SHOW
MONSTER TRUCK, THOSE DAMN CROWS, MYKE GRAY FEAT KIM JENNETT, MORE

Pentrich	Coney Grey Showground	Jul 29-31

ROCK AT THE BAY
SON OF MAN, BUCK & EVANS, BUFFALO SUMMER, MORE

Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Jun 5

ROMEO'S DAUGHTER, SWEET CRISIS

Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Mar 12

Classic Rock Recommends

Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Mar 13
Bilston	Robin 2	Mar 18
Buckley	Tivoli	Mar 20
Newcastle	Trillians	Mar 25
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Mar 26
Glasgow	Hard Rock Café	Mar 27
London	Highbury Garage	Apr 10

ROSE TATTOO

London	Islington Assembly Hall	Jul 19
Birmingham	Institute 2	Jul 20
Glasgow	SWG3	Jul 21

JOE SATRIANI

Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Apr 30
Bexhill	De La Warr Pavilion	May 1
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	May 2
London	Palladium	May 4
Gateshead	The Sage	May 5
Glasgow	Academy	May 6

SAXON

London	Hammersmith Apollo	May 1
Glasgow	Barrowland	May 2
Manchester	Apollo	May 3

JOANNE SHAW TAYLOR

Oxford	Academy 2	Apr 6
Swansea	Sin City	Apr 7
Kendal	Brewery Arts Centre	Apr 9
Liverpool	Arts Club	Apr 10
Nottingham	Glee Club	Apr 11
Edinburgh	Liquid Rooms	Apr 13
Glasgow	St Luke's Church	Apr 14
Leeds	Warehouse	Apr 15
Newcastle	Riverside	Apr 16

SKUNK ANANSIE

Cardiff	University	Jun 7
Nottingham	Rock City	Jun 8
Lincoln	Engine Shed	Jun 9
Newcastle	Academy	Jun 11
Glasgow	Academy	Jun 13
Manchester	Victoria Warehouse	Jun 14
Norwich	UEA	Jun 15
London	Meltdown Festival	Jun 17
Sheffield	Academy	Jun 18
Birmingham	Academy 1	Jun 19
Brighton	Dome	Jun 21
Guildford	G Live	Jun 22
Folkestone	Leas Cliff Hall	Jun 23
Leeds	Academy	Jun 25
Bristol	Academy	Jun 26
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Jun 29
Leicester	Academy	Jun 30
London	Brixton Academy	Jul 2

SLAM DUNK FESTIVAL
SUM 41, NOFX, PENNYWISE, MORE

Leeds	Temple Newsam Park	May 29
Hatfield	Hatfield Park	May 30

SOCIAL DISTORTION

Manchester	The Ritz	Jul 14
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Jul 16

SOS FESTIVAL
MYKE GRAY FEAT KIM JENNETT, PISTON, HANDS OFF GRETEL, MORE

Prestwich	Longfield Suite	Jul 2-4

SOUTHPORT BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL
THE ANIMALS, HENRIK FREISCHLADER, KYLA BROX, MORE

Southport	The Atkinson	Feb 21

STEELHOUSE FESTIVAL
TOM KEIFER, H.E.A.T, PHIL CAMPBELL, MORE

Ebbw Vale	Hafod-y-Dafal Farm	Jul 23-25

STIFF LITTLE FINGERS,
THE PROFESSIONALS, TV SMITH

Bristol	Academy	Mar 4
Cardiff	Great Hall	Mar 5
Birmingham	Academy	Mar 6
Portsmouth	Pyramid Centre	Mar 8
Northampton	Roadmender	Mar 9
Norwich	Waterfront	Mar 10
Newcastle	Academy	Mar 12
Leeds	Academy	Mar 13
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 14
Troon	Concert Hall	Mar 16
Glasgow	Barrowland	Mar 17
Manchester	Academy	Mar 19
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Mar 20

STONE BROKEN, PHIL X & THE DRILLS,
THE FALLEN STATE

Norwich	Waterfront	Apr 18
Manchester	Academy 2	Apr 19
Newcastle	Riverside	Apr 20
Glasgow	Garage	Apr 21
Cardiff	University	Apr 23
Bristol	SWX	Apr 24
Exeter	Lemon Grove	Apr 25

Brighton	Chalk	Apr 26
Portsmouth	Wedgewood Rooms	Apr 28
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Apr 29
Birmingham	Institute	Apr 30

THE STRUTS (UNPLUGGED)

Sheffield	Foundry	Mar 1
Leeds	Wardrobe	Mar 2
Kingston-upon-Thames	Pryzm	Mar 3
Southampton	1896	Mar 4

GEOFF TATE

Belfast	Limelight	Apr 23
Dublin	Lost Lane	Apr 24
London	Camden Underworld	Apr 26
Bilston	Robin 2	Apr 27
Newcastle	Trillians	Apr 28
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Apr 29
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Apr 30
Inverness	Mad Hatters	May 3
Edinburgh	Bannermans Bar	May 5
Glasgow	Cathouse	May 7
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	May 9
Bournemouth	Madding Crowd	May 13
Nuneaton	Queens Hall	May 14
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	May 15

THERAPY?

Brighton	Concorde 2	May 5
Portsmouth	Wedgewood Rooms	May 6
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	May 7
Manchester	The Ritz	May 8
Cardiff	Tramshed	May 10
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	May 11
Bristol	SWX	May 13
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	May 14
Nottingham	Rock City	May 15
Cambridge	Junction	May 17
Newcastle	Riverside	May 26
Glasgow	Garage	May 27
Hull	The Welly	May 28
Norwich	Waterfront	May 29

GEORGE THOROGOOD

Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Jul 23
London	Shepherds Bush Empire	Jul 25
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Jul 26
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Jul 28
York	Barbican	Jul 30
Glasgow	SEC Armadillo	Jul 31
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Aug 1

Recommended

THUNDER, UGLY KID JOE

Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	May 13
Birmingham	Resorts World Arena	May 14
London	Wembley Arena	May 15
Leeds	First Direct Arena	May 22
Glasgow	Clyde Auditorium	May 23

THUNDERMOTHER, BETH BLADE & THE BEAUTIFUL DISASTERS

Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Sep 22
Carlisle	Brickyard	Sep 23
Bradford	Nightrain	Sep 24
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Sep 25
Newcastle	Trillians	Sep 27
London	Camden Underworld	Sep 28
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Sep 30
Buckley	Tivoli	Oct 1
Newport	Patriot	Oct 2
Plymouth	Junction	Oct 3

ROBIN TROWER, SARI SCHORR

Southampton	The Brook	Apr 21
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Apr 22
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Apr 24

MARTIN TURNER EX-WISHBONE ASH

Maidenhead	Norden Farm Centre	Dec 5
Cardiff	The Globe	Jan 22
Lytham St Annes	Lowther Pavilion	Jan 23
Newcastle	The Cluny	Jan 27
Kinross	Green Hotel	Jan 29
Chislehurst	Beaverwood Club	Feb 11
Sutton	Boom Boom Club	Feb 12
Dartmouth	Flavel Arts Centre	Feb 14
Selby	Town Hall	Feb 25
Derby	Flowerpot	Mar 5
Cornwall	Tencreek Holiday Park	Mar 20
Havant	Spring Arts & Heritage Centre	Apr 9
Worcester	Huntingdon Hall	Apr 16
Hessle	Town Hall	Apr 23
Knaresborough	Frazer Theatre	Apr 24
Twickenham	Eel Pie Club	Apr 29

TYKETTO, GIN ANNIE

London	Highbury Garage	Mar 19
Manchester	Club Academy	Mar 20
Glasgow	St Luke's Church	Mar 21

GEORGE THOROGOOD

The veteran American rocker returns to the UK next summer to deliver *Bad To The Bone* and a bagful of more belters.

See below for dates. Currently July 23 to 31 and August 1.

Newcastle	The Cluny	Mar 24
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Mar 25
Bilston	Robin 2	Mar 26
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Mar 27

VANDENBERG FEATURING RONNIE ROMERO

London	Highbury Garage	Dec 1

VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR

Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Apr 26
London	Palladium	May 3
Birmingham	Town Hall	May 4
Bath	Forum	May 5
Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	May 6

RICKY WARWICK & THE FIGHTING HEARTS, VIRGINMARYS

Cambridge	Junction	Apr 28
Norwich	Waterfront	Apr 29
Bedford	Esquires	Apr 30
Swansea	Sound Bay Festival	May 1
London	Islington Academy	May 2
Newcastle	University Students Union	May 4
Glasgow	Garage G2	May 5
Belfast	Limelight 2	May 6
Manchester	Club Academy	May 7
Carlisle	Brickyard	May 8
Buckley	Tivoli	May 9
Reading	Sub 89	May 12
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	May 13
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	May 14, 15
Leeds	Warehouse	May 16
Bournemouth	Madding Crowd	May 19
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	May 20
Lincoln	Call Of The Wild Festival	May 21

BILLY WALTON BAND

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Mar 16

WAR OF THE WORLDS

Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Mar 31
Birmingham	Arena	Apr 1
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Apr 3
Brighton	Centre	Apr 5
Bournemouth	International Centre	Apr 6, 7
Manchester	Arena	Apr 9
Glasgow	The Hydro	Apr 10
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Apr 11
Hull	Bonus Arena	Apr 13
Liverpool	M&S Bank Arena	Apr 14
Newcastle	Utilita Arena	Apr 15
London	O2 Arena	Apr 17

STAN WEBB'S CHICKEN SHACK,
SUSAN SANTOS

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Jan 13

WHITBY BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL
THE ANIMALS, HENRIK FREISCHLADER, KYLA BROX, MORE

Whitby	Pavilion	Feb 20

THE WHITE BUFFALO, LA EDWARDS

Bristol	Academy	Apr 19
London	Kentish Town Forum	Apr 20
Manchester	The Ritz	Apr 22
Newcastle	Academy	Apr 23
Liverpool	Arts Club	Apr 24

Glasgow	Academy	Apr 26
Birmingham	Institute	Apr 27

THE WHO

Dublin	3 Arena	Mar 3
Liverpool	M&S Bank Arena	Mar 8
Glasgow	The Hydro	Mar 10
Newcastle	Utilita Arena	Mar 12
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Mar 15
Birmingham	RWA	Mar 17
London	Wembley Arena	Mar 22
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Mar 24
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Mar 27
Manchester	Arena Mar 29	

WISHBONE ASH

Gateshead	The Sage	Jan 26
New Brighton	Floral Pavilion Theatre	Jan 27
Bristol	St George's Hall	Jan 28
Honiton	The Beehive	Nov 13
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Nov 14
London	Islington Academy	Nov 18

XENTRIX

London	Camden Underworld	Apr 29

YES

Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	May 16
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	May 17
York	Barbican	May 19
Gateshead	The Sage	May 20
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	May 22
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	May 23
London	Royal Albert Hall	May 24
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	May 28

YOU ME AT SIX

Glasgow	Barrowland	May 19
Bristol	Academy	May 20
Manchester	Academy	May 21
Newcastle	Academy	May 23
Birmingham	Institute	May 24
London	Kentish Town Forum	May 25

MIKE ZITO

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Apr 13

THE ZOMBIES

Harpenden	Public Halls	Feb 11, 12
Fletching	Trading Boundaries	Feb 13, 14
Wavendon	The Stables	Feb 16
Glasgow	Òran Mór	Feb 18
Gateshead	The Sage	Feb 19
New Brighton	Floral Pavilion	Feb 20
Bristol	The Fleece	Feb 25
Exmouth	Pavilion	Feb 26
Ystradgynlais	The Welfare	Feb 27
London	Chelsea Under The Bridge	Mar 4
Wimborne	Minster Tivoli Theatre	Mar 5
Taunton	Brewhouse Theatre	Mar

Live Streamed Shows

FRANK CARTER & THE RATTLESNAKES

London	Brixton Academy	Nov 13

ORANGE GOBLIN

London	Tufnell Park Dome	Nov 15, 16

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'The Slipknot frontman is in celebratory mood, and his joy is palpable.'

Corey Taylor

Inglewood, California
The Forum

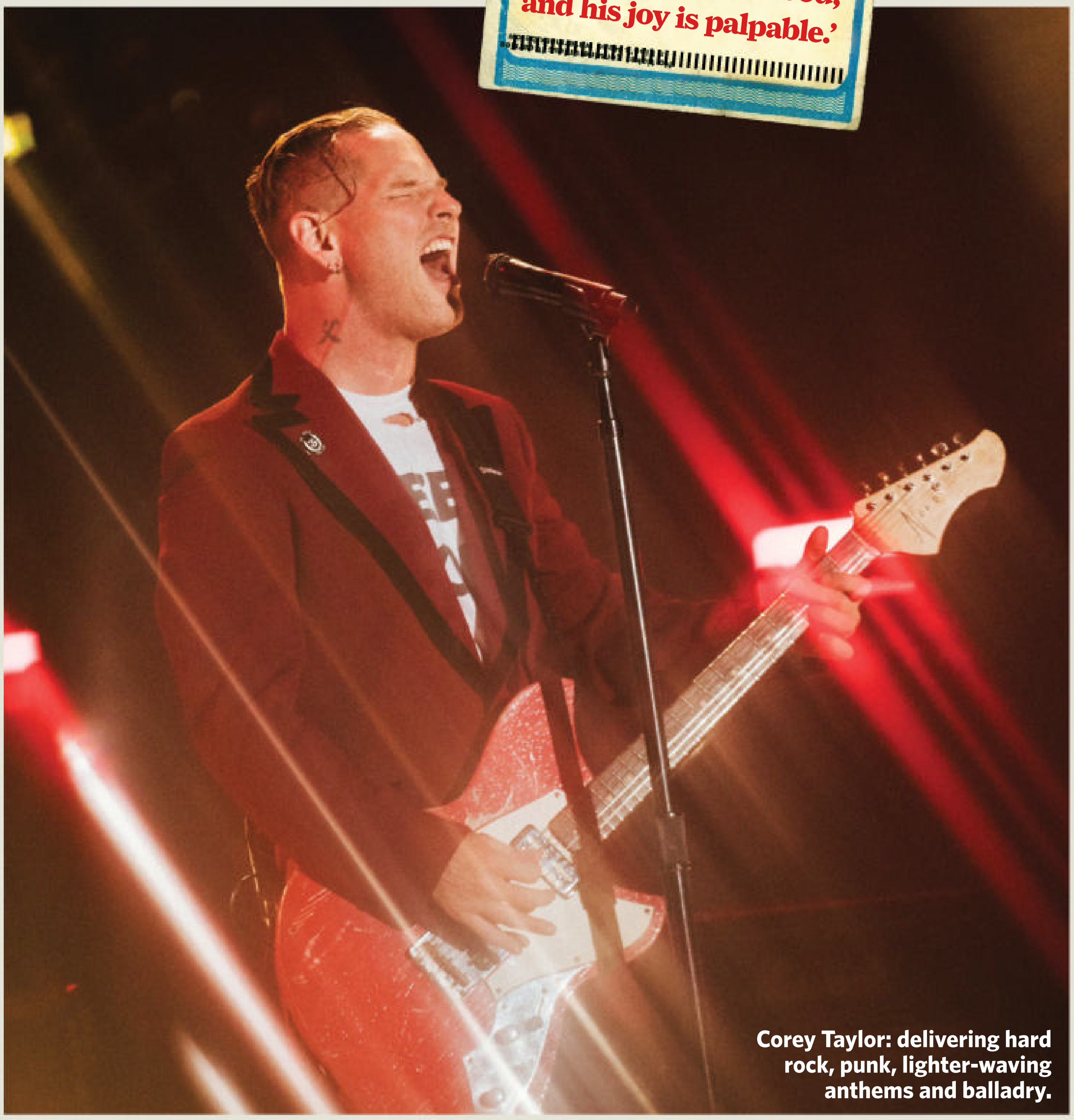
Slipknot frontman turns into Mr Friday Night.

★ "Look at you people out there," Corey Taylor says with a chuckle, savouring the irony of playing to a near-empty 17,500-capacity Forum. But while the venue may possibly be adding tumbleweed to the handful of photographers and crew at least two metres away from the lip of the stage, Taylor and his band are treating this streamed event like a sold-out arena show.

And quite right, too. With his debut solo album *CMFT* out today, the Slipknot frontman is in celebratory mood, and his joy is especially palpable on a 21-inch screen hooked up through the hi-fi. Indeed, with the album's mix of hard rock, punk, lighter-waving anthems and balladry, Taylor has distilled the very essence of the jukebox-soundtracked Friday nights that were taken for granted and are now so sorely missed.

The opening one-two of *HWY 666* and *Meine Lux* don't just leap out of the traps, they also snarl menacingly while they're at it. Aided by Stone Sour guitarist Christian Martucci, fret-worrier Zach Throne, bassist Jason Christopher and drummer Dustin Robert: collectively a mass of facial hair and tattooed skin that plugs in to the mains and crackles with seemingly endless reserves of energy. Gloopy ballad *Home* fares less well, but that's soon forgiven as soon as belters such as *Everybody Dies On My Birthday* come along, thus ensuring the weekend starts here in fine style.

Julian Marszalek



Corey Taylor: delivering hard rock, punk, lighter-waving anthems and balladry.

The Wedding Present

Undisclosed venue, Brighton

A lesson in livestreaming.

★ Try to stop a speeding wheel dead in its tracks and something's gonna break. In the case of full-throttle indie rock road warriors The Wedding Present, facing the postponement of 2020's live schedule and their annual At The Edge Of The Sea festival in Brighton, it was the lockdown that had to bend. David Gedge, white-haired for the pandemic, has been performing regular online acoustic sets for the duration, and this full-band livestream from an undisclosed Brighton venue brings their brilliant, often ferocious heartache pop back from the bubble with a pure unleashed rock fervour.

Even for a gig with no audience, they set out to crowd-please. The *George Best* strum frenzies of *My Favourite Dress* and *Everyone Thinks He Looks Daft* soon give way to a joyous *Kennedy*, its final section of seemingly endless volcanic geyser riffs granted a clarity usually lost in the mosh. And as much as the clinical, computerised feel of the thing stifles the hypnotic climax of *What Have I Said Now?* and exaggerates the awkward tempo shifts of the otherwise stunning *Heather*, it brings a welcome crispness to poppier numbers like *Corduroy* and the soaring *Rachel* – "The best pop song you'll hear this year," Gedge correctly self-reviews.

The best livestream too. This is the only online Zoom you need to catch up on.

Mark Beaumont

GINA JOY CHONG

The Last Internationale

Rock In Río Tea, Ponteareas

Firebrand New York duo singe north-western Spain with incendiary set.

★ As the sun sets, The Last Internationale skip out for an acoustic show on a concrete bandstand in a small park, and are greeted by an audience wearing blue surgical masks, sitting in pairs and threes on socially-distanced chairs.

In her shades and a multi-coloured tassled bomber jacket, Delila Paz makes quite an entrance. But that's nothing of an eyebrow-raiser compared to when she opens her mouth to sing. To her right, guitar slinger Edgey Pires, hunched over a 12-string as they begin with *Killing Fields*, somehow manages not to stare in amazement.

After *Mind Ain't Free, We Will Reign* and *Wanted Man*, Paz gets rid of her jacket and the pair are both in de-rigeur black with red trim. A simple, calculated and cool look matched by the electric piano that she sits at for the as-yet-unreleased *Running For A Dream*. A heart-rending lyric on the plight of asylum seekers is matched by a jaw-dropping performance.

The goosebumps remain as Delila steps down in front of the stage during the night's only cover – *Change Is Gonna Come* by Sam Cooke – and stamps a sparkly gold stack-heel on the concrete while singing like *everyone*'s lives depended on it, before Edgey's guitar steers them into *Hard Times* and *Hit Em With Your Blues* and an epic evening ends with the foot-stompin' *1968*.

Neil Jeffries

Stone Temple Pilots

Who knows where?

Purple **livestream lacks colour.**

★ A flimsy '*Purple* livestream' is all you get in terms of what to expect. But one of the great bands of the 90s playing one of their best albums in its entirety live, yours for just $10? Wrap it up, I'll take it. I mean, the album is a classic. And they'll probably be performing somewhere really interesting or unusual, and/or maybe playing all or some of the songs differently to how we've heard them before, right?

But no, they play in what appears to be a dim, grey rehearsal space, so visually it's not what you'd call eye-popping, and they stick as close to the album versions of the songs as you could get. There's the slow, tank-like momentum of *Meat Plow*; hard-hitting *Vasoline* with its magnificent pummelling chorus; the elegant *Interstate Love Song*; the folkish, pretty acoustic number *Pretty Penny*... all note- and beat-perfect – even singer Jeff Gutt sounds spookily like the late Weiland. Marvellous music. But with a performance as thrilling, even interesting as... well, watching a band in a rehearsal room, all of them looking throughout like they've lost a tenner and found a pound, you really might have been better spending the $10 fee on a pizza and a beer and watching some punchy STP footage on YouTube.

Song introductions are few, and are voice-overs with a visual of either a recording tape box or the LP sleeve. The STP guys are in the room. There are cameras. How difficult would it have been to put the two together?

Great band, great songs, great opportunity missed.

Paul Henderson

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Brothers Osborne

Skeletons album release party

Short 'n' sweet showcase from country-fried rockers John, TJ and co.

★ Blue-collar plumber's boys-turned-Nashville stars, the Brothers Osborne have grafted for years to get to this hi-spec release night for *Skeletons*, their third album, the rockiest thing they've ever done and their strongest set of tunes, all of them itching to be played live.

"This is awesome, we miss y'all!" TJ Osborne says, looking at the walls of beaming faces either side of him – fan club members, projected from their homes as 'virtual fans'. "That's such a weird term," he continues, "I hate that, 'virtual fan'. Makes it sound like you're not even real."

Still, needs must, in these times of social distancing and increased online living. Clocking in at just under half an hour, and preceded by a pre-show 'hang' (i.e. a few minutes of answering fan questions), it's more of a pre-party appetiser, but a slick, thoughtfully arranged one, complete with immersive projections tying in with the *Skeletons* artwork. The set itself – seven hooky cherries picked from the record – sees them take rock'n'roll, funky moments, Little Feat-esque swamp boogies and breakneck bluegrass in their stride with an easy focus and fun. Guitarist John brings to mind Derek Trucks at various loose-limbed (and deceptively shit-hot) points, and on *All The Good Ones Are* they come across kinda like Blackberry Smoke jamming with Springsteen.

Intrigued? If you missed out before it's now available for free online.

Polly Glass

Thurston Moore

London Rough Trade East

A streamed show by the idiosyncratic guitarist from a London vinyl Mecca.

★ With his right hand becoming a blur, Thurston Moore closes his eyes, tilts his head back and puts his mind into a state of bliss as the epic *Locomotives* rolls ever on. The noise emanating from his uniquely tuned guitar steadily evolves from chimes into an ever-circling drone, and it soon becomes difficult not to share in his sense of ecstasy.

While guitarist James Sedwards and electronics embellisher Jon Leidecker are absent due to the ongoing pandemic, modern technology enables tonight's show to be streamed live from an empty venue. Beautifully shot in black and white, Moore is joined by bassist Debbie Googe and drummer Jem Doulton as the trio perform material from his superlative new album *By The Fire*.

As with most gigs, it takes a little bit of time for the sound to settle. But with opening numbers *Hashish* and *Cantaloupe* – the most straightforward songs on offer – done and dusted, the trio lock into each other's core talents to whip up a performance that transcends its limited environment, with *Siren* the players stretching out to explore sonic realms and vistas. Jaws drop as the mid-section noise crescendo kicks back into the central chiming riff so seamlessly as to not see the join.

Even with two members down, Thurston Moore still gives 100 per cent.

Julian Marszalek

BRYCE HALL

"'Relentless' is the only description that fits these performances.'

Lamb Of God: pulling off the no-audience livestream inspirationally.

Lamb Of God

Ashes Of The Wake and *Lamb Of God* livestreams

Two albums played in their entirety and in sequence, with aplomb.

★ 'Relentless' is the only description that fits these two livestream performances from one of the finest metal bands of this era, in which the five-piece play the current self-titled album and 2004's *Ashes Of The Wake* in their entirety on two separate nights at the Broadberry in the band's home town of Richmond, Virginia. And they're ferociously magnificent.

The first stream has all of the *Lamb Of God* album in sequence, with scarcely any pause. They clearly understand that playing without an audience requires a different mind-set, and adapt supremely well. Just about the only times frontman Randy Blythe addresses the watching fans directly is when he dedicates *Reality Bath* to late Power Trip vocalist Riley Gale, and when introducing new song *The Death Of Us* (recently recorded for the film *Bill & Ted Face The Music*) during the four-song encore.

A week later, in the same venue the band repeat the format when tearing through 2004's *Ashes Of The Wake*, again in sequence. There are no awkward moments of silence, the band are obviously relishing the occasion, and for the three song encore they take us back to 2000's *New American Gospel* with purpose and power. Final tune *Black Label* is towering.

It's tough for bands to make livestreams work when they're forced to play without an audience, but Lamb Of God do it inspirationally.

Malcolm Dome

The Soundtrack Of My Life

Actor (and muso) *William Shatner* on the records, artists and gigs that are of lasting significance to him.

Interview: **Rob Hughes**

Enterprising screen legend William Shatner may be best known for TV roles in *Star Trek*, *T.J. Hooker* and *Boston Legal*, but he has also recorded a series of thoroughly unique albums under his own name. The latest is *The Blues*, which sees the 89-year-old tackle a bunch of standards with help from a starry cast that includes guitarists Ritchie Blackmore, James Burton, Steve Cropper and Albert Lee. Here's the Captain's Log of the music part of his life.

THE FIRST MUSIC I REMEMBER HEARING

My dad would come home from work every Saturday afternoon, lie down on the couch and listen to the Metropolitan Opera. And I would listen too. They were great times, because the operatic voice is like an Olympic muscle, having been trained for years and years. And it's capable of such subtlety and range. It's a miracle. Music itself is remarkable.

THE JAZZ CLASSIC

Jazz is something I loved from an early age. John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* was an important album for me. I'm a white guy from Montreal, and didn't know that I was loving so much music that stemmed from the blues, like jazz. All those songs emanate from the heart. Even the more playful ones reflect an inner torment.

AN INSPIRATIONAL PERFORMER

One of the songs on *The Blues* is *I Put A Spell On You*. I listened to Screamin' Jay Hawkins's original and he was insane and cackling. So I decided to take a leaf from his book and invent this character for the animated video that goes with the song. It takes place in a bar, and this animated version of me is getting drunk while a band plays in the corner. Nobody is paying any attention to me. This crazy Shatner character, barely recognisable, is cackling away to this full-bosomed, Shakespearean barmaid: "I put a spell on you and now you're mine!" It's a scream. You have to see it to believe it.

THE BLUES SINGER

BB King has such a guttural, heartfelt, soulful voice. And I loved his ability to be an entertainer for so long. When I was making *The Blues*, I actually called his daughter to see if there was any information she could give me about him. I wanted to make a documentary on this search for the right blues songs to cover. His daughter said: "You're a gift from God!" It was very meaningful.

THE SONGWRITER

I listen to a lot of radio, and there's so much music I admire but I can never remember the names of the artists I'm hearing. I have to keep asking friends to tell me! My tastes really go back to music theatre and the great music writers. I'm talking about people like Oscar Hammerstein [best known for his music for Hollywood musicals including *Oklahoma!*, *South Pacific* and *The King And I*], but I'm guessing that most people today wouldn't know who I'm talking about.

THE SONG I WISH I'D WRITTEN

It Was A Very Good Year [recorded by Frank Sinatra, among others]. I recorded a version of that on my first album, *The Transformed Man* [1968], where I'm reflecting on changes in the stages in life that one goes through. It's a very special song.

THE GREATEST ROCK ALBUM

I think it has to be *Who's Next*. For me it's all about the way The Who complement each other. I love to hear groups who've played together for a long time. It's like they're a company of actors who know each other so well and dovetail their performances to fit. And Pete Townshend – that guitar! The screech, the wail, of an electric guitar is unlike anything else.

MY GAME-CHANGING ALBUM

I'd been making an album here and there, then Ben Folds asked me to do two songs on an album, called *Fear Of Pop: Volume 1* [1998], that became very popular. I ended up on stage with him too. I came on late in the set and we did three or four songs together then left. There were several hundred people in the audience and they carried on clapping for half an hour. But we didn't have any more material, so when we came back out it was like: "Elvis has left the building!" Everyone was screaming and yelling. It was quite a sensation. A few years later I made *Has Been* with Ben Folds. It was very well-received, and begat these other albums of mine. That's when I began to think: "How can I do this better?"

THE PERFECT ALBUM FOR MY VOICE

During the making of *The Blues*, I realised that it was exactly right for me. Billy Gibbons gave me these books to read about the blues and I began to educate myself. I felt very deeply about honouring these songs and doing them in my own way. On the first day in the studio, I sat in front of the microphone and suddenly found my voice. It was deep and guttural. The other guys in the studio fell over backwards, clapping their hands and going: "Yes! Yes!"

MY AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ALBUM

I've been recording a new album, based on incidents from my life. For example, I left home after university, packing everything into a little Morris Minor and made my way from Montreal to Toronto. I was crossing a narrow bridge, when an eighteen-wheeler came towards me from the other side. The wind from it almost pushed my little car over the side and into the water. It would've been just like I'd never existed. So I've used it as an image in one of the songs, showing how fate comes at you from time to time, to obliterate you, and how you must struggle against it. The album's working title is *Love, Death And Horses*. We're hoping it'll be out around Christmas time.

The Blues is out now via Cleopatra Records.

"BB King has such a guttural, heartfelt, soulful voice."

WILLIAM SHATNER: SHUTTERSTOCK; BB KING: GETTY

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